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Failure a 'disaster' for Britain

Major: why I won't quit EMU talks

By Philip Webster, Political Editor

BRITAIN must stay in the single currency negotiations to prevent the rest of Europe fudging the terms of entry and creating a failed monetary union that would be a disaster for the country and the continent, John Major writes in *The Times* today.

The Prime Minister, who will meet fellow European leaders at an informal summit on the future of the EU in Dublin today, offers his most detailed defence yet of his "wait and see" approach in an attempt to prevent next week's Conservative conference descending into a battle over whether membership of a single currency should be ruled out for the lifetime of the next parliament.

He says that Britain must be in the talks because monetary union will have a deep impact on this country whether it joins or not. He also promises to accept the verdict of a referendum that would be called if the Government wanted to go ahead, although he indicates for the first time some doubt about whether a single currency will be introduced on target in 1999.

Mr Major's article on page 20 is intended to be a definitive statement of the Government's position through to the election and beyond and to take the heat out of an issue that will almost certainly dominate the Bournemouth gathering next week. His decision to concentrate on the importance of Britain staying in the

talks to influence the shape of monetary union, whether or not Britain is in it, marks a subtle change of emphasis.

He writes: "If EMU goes ahead, with or without us, it is in our interest to ensure that it does so on a basis and timetable that can be sustained. A failed single currency would be a disaster. Our European partners buy 60 per cent of our exports. Our countries are major investors in their economies."

"If they destabilise their economies and the single market — for example by fudging the criteria for entry — the British economy will suffer as well. We have a strong interest in a thriving European economy so Britain's voice must be heard in the discussion of how a single currency would work."

By staying at the centre of the debate, the Government had already ensured that the exchange-rate mechanism remains voluntary and was best placed to resist protectionist measures damaging to Britain's interests, he says. "We will continue to do so. That is what the City and business expect from us. We must remain closely involved in the debate about the future of our largest market."

Mr Major says the right course is to make a choice about the single currency only when the issues are clear. But he denies that such an approach is a "balancing act".

There were many unknowns that could affect Britain. "At the most basic level we cannot yet be sure EMU will go ahead as planned in 1999. We don't yet know who is likely to be in the first wave if and when it goes ahead."

It is not yet known how much economic convergence will have been achieved or how strictly the economic criteria will be adhered to. He says: "We also need to weigh the effect of being in or out on the City as one of the major financial centres in the world."

Reaffirming his commitment to a referendum, he says: "If we decide to go ahead in the next parliament, we would consult the British nation in a referendum and accept their verdict. If we think it right to stay out we will do so."

Euroscopics are expected to press Mr Major to Britain's place at the talks to try to stop other states joining the single currency in the first wave.

John Redwood, last year's leadership challenger, will tell GMTV tomorrow that only Luxembourg would qualify, but other countries would want to "stretch and weave and duck around the treaty". Britain should work away diplomatically to say "no" to a "half-baked scheme put through on the basis of dubious legality".

EU summit, page 14
No fudge, page 20
Leading article and letters, page 21



A Lifeguards trumpeter rehearsing yesterday for the Horse of the Year show at Wembley

Prince's top aide loses post after royal summit

By Alan Hamilton

COMMANDER Richard Aylard, the Prince of Wales's private secretary, is to leave his post early next year.

The decision was taken at a private meeting between the two men at Balmoral on Thursday. Sources at St James's Palace insisted last night that the parting was by mutual agreement, but it was clear that Commander Aylard, 44, had effectively been dismissed.

A spokeswoman for the Prince said last night that Commander Aylard had taken the job in 1991 for a five-year period, and had now served 5½ years. "He has always told the Prince that he would leave at some stage: both men now feel that the time is right for a change," the spokeswoman said.

A replacement is expected to be announced soon: the front-runners are likely to be Stephen Lamport, the Prince's assistant private secretary, who was recruited from the Foreign Office, and Mark Boland, another assistant secretary, who trained as a lawyer and was recently recruited from the Press Complaints Commission.

Commander Aylard's fate appears to have been sealed when he attended the recent Balmoral summit with senior members of the Royal Family and their principal advisers. His consistent loyalty to the Prince during the heir to the throne's separation and eventual divorce did not endear him to the old guard of Buckingham Palace courtiers led by Sir Robert Fellowes, the Queen's private secretary.

Throughout the Prince's marital difficulties, Com-

mander Aylard encouraged him to adopt a policy of openness. It was he who advised the Prince to confess adultery with Camilla Parker Bowles in the 1994 ITV documentary made by Jonathan Dimbleby, and since then he is believed to have favoured a gradual introduction of Mrs Parker Bowles into the public eye, in the hope that she would gain a wider acceptance.

However, Commander Aylard's policy of honesty did not gain the approval of Buck-



Aylard: advised Prince to adopt "open" policy

ham Palace, determined at all costs to repair the damage of the Prince's divorce. The Prince's confession of adultery prompted the Princess of Wales to make her own televised confession about an affair with Major James Hewitt, from the lofty heights of Buckingham Palace, the whole coinage of royalty appeared to be in a downward spiral of devaluation.

The private secretary's own personal circumstances did not help him: he is currently in divorce proceedings with his second wife, with whom he has two young daughters.

Pesticide blamed for Gulf illness

Some of the servicemen and women suffering from so-called Gulf War syndrome may have been poisoned by pesticides used in heavy doses to kill off a plague of disease-carrying flies and bugs in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, according to the latest research by the Ministry of Defence.

Record century for teenager

Pakistan cricketer Shahid Afridi, 16, set a one-day international record in Nairobi yesterday when he scored a century off 37 balls against Sri Lanka in their four nations tournament match.

The all-rounder hit 11 sixes and six fours — a display that one spectator said "looked more like baseball".

The Times on the Internet <http://www.the-times.co.uk>



Cocaine question hangs over US election debate

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

AS PRESIDENT Clinton and Bob Dole prepared for their first presidential debate in Hartford, Connecticut, tomorrow night two startling allegations were levelled against the President and his Administration yesterday.

Emmett Tyrrell, editor of the right-wing *American Spectator* magazine, claimed Mr Clinton was refusing to release his medical records because he was a heavy cocaine user in the early 1980s and may have been treated for an overdose.

Dennis Sculimbrene, a former FBI agent who checked the backgrounds of White House employees until last April, told *The Wall Street Journal*, equally right-wing, that "about 25 per cent of the incoming administration... had a problem with illegal drugs. Not just casual experimentation, but a pattern of usage... not just marijuana but cocaine, amphetamines, amphetamine-derived 'designer' drugs such as Ecstasy, hashish, mushrooms." The drug-takers included "senior aides and advisers to the President".

The allegations were the latest in a long series of charges bought by Mr Clinton's political enemies since 1992. None have ever been proved or dismissed, but what

intrigued Washington yesterday was whether Mr Dole would find an oblique way of raising them before a live television audience of perhaps 80 million tomorrow.

Would he challenge Mr Clinton to release his medical records? Would he insist the President rule out second-term pardons for convicted White-water associates who might otherwise co-operate with the special prosecutor? Would he demand publication of a suppressed FBI report that allegedly exonerates Mr Clinton for lack of leadership on drug abuse? "The unexpected is the secret of the battlefield," teased Scott Reed, Mr Dole's campaign manager.

Mr Dole, trailing badly with one month left before polling day, must rock Mr Clinton to retain any hope of winning, but the risks of a slashing attack are great. He would instantly revive the mean "hatchet man" image that has dogged him since his 1976 vice-presidential debate against Walter Mondale, when he snarled that Vietnam, Korea and the Second World War were "Democrat wars".

Both men have hidden themselves away with large retinues to prepare — Mr Dole at his Florida condominium and Mr Clinton, on a rural New York estate.



Brady: she allegedly misled fans on prices

Top woman in football sent for trial

By Michael Horsnell and Peter Ball

KAREN BRADY, managing director of Birmingham City football club, was committed for trial yesterday on charges of advertising misleading prices for away match tickets last year.

David Sullivan, the first division club's owner, and the directors immediately threatened to sue, blaming Birmingham City Council and some supporters for the litigation.

Miss Brady, 27, the only woman at such a level in English football, and the club each face five counts under the Consumer Protection Act. The prosecution is over the club charging supporters £15 to join their Away Travel Club, the only way they could obtain tickets for away games. That has now been scrapped.

Gun fanatic put in charge of armoury at club

By Stewart Tendler and Kate Alderson

A DISTURBED gun enthusiast who drew up plans for a Hungerford-style massacre of passers-by and the police officers who took away his gun licence succeeded in becoming an armorer at his local gun club, it was disclosed yesterday.

Jason Curtis, 27, lost his firearms certificate to hold 19 weapons two years ago when police were concerned at his threats to shoot intruders, but continued to have lawful access to some of them which he had given to his gun club. He also imported weapon parts from the United States and continued to make his own ammunition.

Last night as Curtis, from Llandridon, Powys, was sent by a judge to Ashworth Hospital, Merseyside, for psychiatric assessment after pleading guilty to four firearms charges, senior police officers believed they had narrowly averted another massacre.

One, who described Curtis as "a walking time bomb", said the way he had "weaved" his way round the gun laws. Coming a month before the publication of Lord Cullen's report on Dunblane the case is certain to be taken up by gun reformers such as the Snowdrop Group, which called for a total gun ban at the Labour Party conference this week.

According to police, Curtis drafted a five-page plan in which he detailed walking into the town's police station and shooting down an inspector and two PCs involved in seizing his firearms certificate. Curtis then planned to walk home shooting passers-by as he went. He would end the massacre by waiting for armed police to arrive and die in a shootout.

Remanding Curtis for the assessment, Recorder Alex Carlisle QC at the Mold Crown Court described the case as serious. "This is a man who on the face of it poses a very specific danger to certain police officers and possibly a general danger because of his attitude to firearms."

Curtis, who lived on his own and was known as a "loner" with a life-long fascination for guns, lost his certificate when he applied to hold four or five more guns two years ago. When a policeman checked security at his home Curtis assured him the guns would be safe and threatened that he would kill anyone trying to break in.

Police forced Curtis to lose his certificate and he never forgave the officers involved. In June this year he was stopped for a drugs check and his home was searched. The search revealed the plan.

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THE TIMES ON MONDAY



ANATOMY OF AN ENIGMA

In part one of Michael Peppiatt's extraordinary biography of Francis Bacon: the cold and cruel childhood that shaped genius

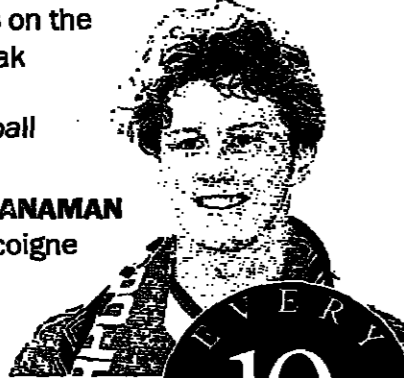
14-PAGE SPORTS SECTION

12 CRUCIAL DAYS IN FOOTBALL

Rob Hughes on the make or break fixtures in English football

PLUS:

STEVE McMANAMAN on Paul Gascoigne



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EVERY MONDAY: MATTHEW PARRIS,
COLUMNIST OF THE YEAR

Blunder makes Party go with a bang

I was a pretty loud bang and everybody thought a bomb had gone off. Or had someone been shot? The music stopped. Delegates dancing in the aisles froze. There was complete silence as people stared around in alarm.

Then from above came a rain of little leaflets — Vote Labour — fired from the Winter Gardens balcony. There was a brave "three cheers" but the music returned but it took time. Until the music restarted, people milled distractedly around, the mood of celebration shattered.

It was the first and only big blunder in a week, otherwise almost without incident, and it came in the closing minutes. As delegates and journalists left Blackpool, it remained unclear how the mistake could have been made. Why was the



MATTHEW PARRIS

POLITICAL SKETCH

explosion so loud? Why did they halt the music?

Everything about the closing rally had been going so well. John Prescott had been welcomed with a standing ovation even before he spoke. After the now-routine video (the novelty of conference videos is gone and people are growing bored with them) he made a rousing speech with some good jokes, some bad jokes and some indifferent ones. All alike were greeted with gales of laughter from a rank and file in whose eyes Mr Prescott can do no wrong.

There were moments during his patter when we wondered whether we had wandered into the wrong arena at Black-

pool and found ourselves watching Frank Carson, with Eddie Large's voice.

Labour's deputy leader did his best to keep to his pre-released text — Mr Prescott's controllers now steer him away from all unscripted encounters with Britain — but there was one stumble and it proved the bit delegates loved best. Losing the crib-card of Labour's promises he had planned to hold up, Prescott exploded: "I knew this would happen. You know me. I'm old Labour. Got to use my own words."

Everybody cheered. Spin-doctors' video-pagers flashed "off-message" warnings to new Labour's command-con-

trol centre on the Planet Vanilla. "Off-message" is the PR-speak for signals out of line with the desired image. "We believe in socialist principles!" declared Prescott. Off-message — Beep — Urgent — Abort.

Yet some of the best of Labour's conference has been off-message — or superfluous to the gloss which some want to project. For this is still a party with kindness and idealism in its ranks. The night before Prescott's speech I found myself in a room without videos or flashy displays, for a reception for Alf Morris MP, who is retiring.

The compassionate and tireless Morris has worked for decades for the disabled. Sense (the deaf blind association) together with Alzheimer's and muscular dystrophy groups wanted to thank him. Tony Blair, who must have been exhausted, took the trouble to

come and made a moving speech.

Off-message or not, delegates gave Prescott a rousing ovation yesterday, and all went well — before the bang. But what a change that explosion wrought! The edgy confidence the party has exuded all week evaporated instantly. One bang, one bad stumble, and it was as though delegates feared they had only been dreaming and the game was up. Would a giant spectre of Mrs Thatcher come winging, bat-like, through the hall, as everyone ran screaming for cover?

Confidence returned. Cameramen ambushed a toddler dancing to *It Can Only Get Better*. Scared by the camera flashes, the child stopped and began to cry. Image of weeping babe. Off-message! Off-message! The toddler was hauled away.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cattle cull backlog on farms

At least 400,000 over-age cattle are waiting on farms to be destroyed in response to the BSE scare, more than twice the previous estimate, the Government said.

To deal with the "fresh emergency", ministers promised measures soon to raise the slaughter rate from 35,000 to 55,000 a week and to help farmers, who face the expense of having to keep unproductive animals for up to an extra three months.

Car murder

A man who ran over his sister-in-law three times after she abandoned an arranged marriage was jailed for life for murder at Leeds Crown Court yesterday. Shabir Hussain of Bradford killed Tasleem Sadiq Begum as she met a lover.

Poison dog dies

Dog owners were warned yesterday to guard their pets when a fourth dog died after walking on grass near a housing estate at Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees. Three earlier deaths were caused by pesticide-laced bait.

Maginnis cleared

Police are to take no action against the Ulster Unionist MP Ken Maginnis over allegations of assault at his London flat. He was questioned after a neighbour claimed he was struck when he went to complain about noise.

Tester jailed

Andrew Stone, 32, of Fareham, Hampshire, a convicted fraudster, used by Which? to test cashpoints, was jailed for 5½ years at Southwark Crown Court, southeast London, after he went on to plunder £130,000.

Pay de deux

Two teachers who were unfairly dismissed from the renowned Elmhurst Ballet School in Camberley, Surrey, by a new headmaster who thought they were too old-fashioned won a total of more than £200,000 compensation.

Peace award

Senator George Mitchell is to receive a peace award for his efforts to foster a settlement in Northern Ireland. The chairman of the multi-party talks will receive the accolade from the cross-border group Co-Operation North.

Ex-director jailed

Nigel Burrows, 42, of Bedale, North Yorkshire, a former director of Manchester United football club, was jailed for two years yesterday at Sheffield Crown Court for stealing £145,000 a widow had given him to invest.

MoD discovery throws new light on Gulf War syndrome

Pesticides might have poisoned service personnel

By MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

PESTICIDES might have poisoned some of the servicemen and women suffering from so-called Gulf War syndrome, according to the latest Ministry of Defence research. The pesticides were used in heavy doses against a plague of disease-carrying flies and bugs in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

A senior MoD official said the discovery that British troops serving in the Gulf in 1990 and 1991 had been engaged in much larger-scale pesticide spraying than had been realised did not solve the mystery over the many illnesses affecting hundreds of Gulf War veterans. "This is not the answer for those claiming to be suffering from Gulf War syndrome but it could be a factor," he said. It is not sufficiently important a discovery for it to be thoroughly reviewed by a special MoD medical assessment team

headed by Group Captain Bill Coker, a consultant physician who has been examining all those claiming to be suffering from Gulf War syndrome.

MoD medical experts said the organophosphate pesticides, similar to ones used in sheep-dipping although in much smaller doses, would have caused serious sickness almost immediately if inhaled during spraying.

Organophosphate insecticides, including diazinon, which is acknowledged to be a dangerous substance if used without proper protection, were sprayed on all the British military tents because of the "large problem of flies" affecting British troops in Saudi Arabia. The Americans who were also suffering from plagues of flies and bugs, used the same insecticides.

The MoD medical experts said the number of British

military personnel possibly suffering from pesticide poisoning would have been small, affecting those involved in carrying out the spraying. One official said it might have been only about half a dozen.

The medical reports on the 750 Gulf War veterans examined so far will now be reviewed to see if any of them had suffered from symptoms associated with organophosphate poisoning, including tingling and numbness in the fingers and toes.

Although poisoning from pesticides normally manifested itself within three months, there could be longer-term cases where personnel had further contact with the pesticides on other occasions. It could then lead to asthma, the medical experts said.

More than 1,100 Gulf War veterans are now suffering from a range of illnesses, including chronic fatigue, swollen joints and headaches. The area worst affected by flies was at Al Jubayl, the huge port on the east coast of Saudi Arabia where the majority of British troops were based.

Because pesticide supplies sent from Britain were inadequate to deal with the plague of flies, permission was given for stocks to be bought from local sources. The MoD official said some of the pesticides might have been sprayed in



Nicholas Soames, left, the defence minister, told Michael Colvin, of the defence committee, of findings

breach of strict procedures and this was now being investigated.

The senior MoD official said every attempt was being made to discover whether there was any common factor among those suffering from illnesses which could be directly related to their service in the Gulf. A big research programme into Gulf health issues is to be launched next month, overseen by the Medical Research Council.

The official denied that any British troops could have been affected by a chemical cloud that rose from an Iraqi chemical weapons bunker destroyed by American bombers. Up to 14,000 American soldiers could have been affected.

The official said the nearest British troops to the so-called "bunker 73" were more than 87 miles away to the south of the chemical dump. CIA investigators had discovered that the chemical cloud had drifted northeast about 15 miles, the official said.

The details of the discovery

were outlined in a letter from Nicholas Soames, the Armed Forces Minister, to Michael Colvin, chairman of the all-party Commons Defence Committee.

Richard Barr, a solicitor representing 125 Gulf War veterans, said the MoD disclosure was very important, as research had proved that the effect of organophosphates was increased ten-fold when combined with nerve gas protection tablets. All troops were given the tablets to take regularly.

The MoD admission is very much more significant than it appears at first sight," he said. Veterans had spoken of tents "absolutely running" with pesticides.

David Clark, the Shadow Defence Secretary, welcomed the announcement but said: "I wonder why they have taken four years to get this far and I believe they are playing down the problem even yet by saying this latest problem is unlikely to have affected more than half a dozen people."

Hamilton wins support of local party officials

By ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

OFFICERS of Neil Hamilton's Conservative constituency association rallied behind the Tory MP yesterday in an attempt to end speculation about his future.

Tatton Conservatives accused *The Guardian* of running a dishonest and hysterical vendetta against the former Trade Minister.

A statement, in the name of Alan Barnes, the chairman, which was unanimously approved by the association's 12 officers, said that most members of the 1,800-strong association had reacted with anger to the "torrent of abuse" against their MP. "It was anger followed by intense sympathy for Mr and Mrs Hamilton at their victimisation."

Mr Barnes's statement, which followed reports of dissent within the constituency, said there were no plans for a meeting to discuss Mr Hamilton's future.

The allegations by *The Guardian* that Mr Hamilton had accepted cash for questions from Mohamed Al Fayed, the owner of Harrods, have been referred to Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

The statement added: "Neil has absolute confidence that he will be exonerated. We have absolute confidence in him."

Brian Mawhinney, the Tory Party chairman, yesterday described Mr Hamilton as a good and hard working MP. Pressed on whether Mr Hamilton enjoyed the support of the party high command and the

Prime Minister, he replied: "As we speak, he certainly has my support."

Mr Hamilton kept a low profile in the constituency yesterday as he talked to party officers. His wife, Christine, dismissed speculation that he faced defection.

"We've had the most wonderful support from the Tatton Constituency Association. In a funny way, all these lies and the misrepresentation that has come out from the media in the last few days have actually stiffened their support for Neil," she told Greater Manchester Radio.

Labour spent the day trying to limit the fallout from the dismissal on Thursday of a frontbench spokesman in the House of Lords who publicly supported Ian Greer the lobbyist at the centre of the cash-for-questions affair.

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, stressed that Baroness Turner, the party's employment spokesman who was a non-executive director of Ian Greer Associates, had "behaved very honourably". But he added: "There was a potential conflict of interest and therefore she stood down."

Baroness Turner, 69, who took part in a routine board meeting at IGA yesterday, issued a statement saying: "I have stepped down from the front bench which I regret doing, because I believe I was a good employment spokesman. But I do so knowing that my leader in the Lords acknowledges that I was not guilty of any impropriety."

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Life sentence for high-living career criminal

Conman plotted £20m kidnap from prison

By RICHARD DUCE AND PETER FOSTER

AN ARCH conman who plotted from his prison cell to kidnap one of the wealthiest men in Britain to fund a luxury lifestyle on his release was jailed for life at the Old Bailey yesterday.

Sacheverell De Houghton, 50, was already serving ten years for kidnapping and blackmailing another man when he laid his elaborate plans to raise £20 million. The Oxford graduate, who claimed to have known the Earl of Lucan and the Kray twins, had nurtured his taste for the high life during frequent stays in prison for offences of dishonesty and deception.

Judge Gordon told De Houghton: "You are a highly intelligent man but a highly dangerous one. It is very sad that someone with such obvious abilities should have chosen to spend his life the way he has. The public has got to be protected."

De Houghton was cleared of conspiring to murder the multimillionaire, known only as G, but was convicted of incitement to kidnap. During the month-long trial the jury was told that De Houghton, born in India 56 years ago to a military family, was known to police simply as Stanley Houghton, a career criminal.

He claimed to have attended Eton, but in fact went to a Reading state school. He then won a scholarship to Christchurch to read history, where he funded his social life in London by stealing from fellow students. He boasted to the jury of "liberating" valuable items and, in spite of his homosexuality, saw himself as a "debs' delight".

While in prison he took up compulsive letter-writing to strangers. His erudition and literary knowledge often led to lengthy correspondence with people with no knowledge of his criminal past.

After being imprisoned in 1992 he focused his attention on "preparing for the day he was to be released and wished to make substantial funds so that he could enjoy life". William Boyce, for the prosecution, told the court. He set up bank accounts, negotiated the purchase of a castle in the Hebrides and a Cornish estate, set up bank accounts in Cornwall and Denmark, engaged solicitors, and found a printer for his letterheads and business cards.

His target was the "phenomenally rich" millionaire, and the money was to be extorted under torture. "It is clear that what was intended was to entice G to a quiet location, extract from him by force a very large sum of money and then, probably by using drugs, cause him to lose his memory, mind or life," the judge said. G was affected "considerably" when told of the plan.

De Houghton had been jailed in 1992 for kidnapping John Gaze, an art dealer, and threatening to torture him if he did not hand over art treasures. De Houghton had lured Mr Gaze by claiming to be a dealer in Russian icons. For G the bait was furniture, a particular interest of the multimillionaire. The ruse was to say De Houghton had a very valuable item of furniture. He wrote to G, who took the bait and began to communicate. G's staff were to be faxed



De Houghton: known to police as Stanley Houghton

instructions to transfer the money — after G had agreed under torture, the prosecution said. However, among helpers outside prison recruited by De Houghton was an undercover detective.

De Houghton was still "beavering away" inside prison, writing to banks and surveyors. "He wrote then inviting G to go to Scotland to view the furniture," Mr Boyce said. By February 1996, however, there were fears that De Houghton had become suspicious of the undercover policeman. Detectives decided to make arrests. The prosecution said that De Houghton had also attempted to recruit a former fellow-prisoner, Everton Morrison, to help him.

Mr Morrison, 30, of Croydon, south London, was cleared of conspiring to murder the millionaire. The jury could not agree on a verdict on a further charge against both men of conspiring together to kidnap, and the charge was left on the file.

John McVicar, the writer and criminologist, was a fellow inmate of De Houghton at Wandsworth prison in 1964. Yesterday he remembered him as an entertaining Wildean figure. "Like me he was interested in literature and books, only better read. He played the class ticket: I suppose people didn't think he was the type to be a crook."



Samantha Slater wearing a sari in Trissur prison, where she has spent two years

Model in Indian jail freed after campaign

By COOMI KABOOR AND LIN JENKINS

A BRITISH model has been released from a ten-year prison term in India for possessing drugs after a campaign culminating in an appeal by Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary.

Samantha Slater, 25, from Birmingham, who was convicted of possessing cannabis resin two years ago while backpacking in the country, has been pardoned and released from Trissur central prison in Kerala state. She told an Indian journalist that she has been miserable and fed an "unsatisfactory" diet.

The intervention of Mr Rifkind followed repeated requests from the British authorities, including the former and the present High Commissioner. Miss Slater's mother, Brenda, who is planning to fly to India, said last night: "I can't believe my Sam is finally coming home. I won't have to spend another Christmas without her."

Miss Slater and her boyfriend Andrew Hesketh were spending six months exploring the subcontinent when they were stopped by police January 1992 at Idukki in the mountains south of Goa.

Tracey MacDonald, a family friend, said Miss Slater was mentally well, but suffering from malnutrition. Mr Hesketh, 27, who was jailed for three years and fined, is due to be released next January.

Village loner shot at WPC after pea wine binge

By MICHAEL HORNSBY, COUNTRYSIDE CORRESPONDENT

A JUDGE expressed sympathy yesterday for a man who took pot shots at his neighbour's house with an air rifle after drinking too much of his own pea-pod wine at a village fair.

Vincent Vines, 52, had come to feel like a stranger in his village because of the many newcomers who had moved in, Gloucester Crown Court was told. He was said to spend most of his time alone brewing the wine.

Judge Hutton, who heads the Gloucestershire branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, said: "He is not alone in thinking like that. I sympathise with him. This is something which is happening all over the country, particularly in Gloucestershire."

Vines began shooting after neighbours rejected his offer of the potent wine at a Guy Fawkes party in Hillersley. Peter Heyward, for Vines, said: "He is a lonely and isolated man in the village where he has lived most of his life. Newcomers have moved in and for this typical countryman village life has changed beyond all recognition. It is no longer the village he grew up in and loved."

"He had brewed a large quantity of a good and strong traditional English country wine — pea-pod wine. It is clear that pea-pod wine is a strong wine, one with a kick in it — a kick stronger than his air rifle."

"The people at the bonfire party refused his drink and he felt he had been ostracised by the newcomers to the village. He is a traditional countryman with good country skills."

Don Tait, for the prosecution, said: "He was clearly drunk and was rude and abusive to other people at the party. He tried to offer them drinks but they refused. Then he began singing bawdy songs and was told to go."

After Vines had returned home, neighbours opposite heard him shouting. They then saw him standing in his bedroom window waving an air rifle around. "A woman police officer arrived and saw him aiming the rifle at her," Mr Tait said.

"She heard a shot and a pellet hit the ground nearby. She called for support and police marksmen were called in as well as the police helicopter. A stand-off, which lasted three hours and brought the village to a halt, ended when Vines left his cottage, shouting and waving a garden spade."

"He was arrested and when the officers searched his home they discovered 53 gallons of home-made wine. Obviously he had tried the wine with fairly lethal consequences."

Vines admitted possessing an air rifle while committing criminal damage and was ordered to do 200 hours' community service. The judge told him: "You have got to learn to live with changing conditions. I understand Hillersley, like many other villages, is not what it was, but you have to change with it."



The Waterman Doll

Two-inch pen sold for £1,800

By JOHN SHAW

A TWO-INCH fountain pen, believed to be the smallest in the world, was auctioned for £1,840 in London yesterday. The black Waterman Doll, about 80 years old and still working, was sold in its original box to a collector for just above its estimate.

The 1,000-lot sale at Bonhams attracted worldwide interest. A red Waterman 416 with a silver filigree decoration fetched £4,370.

A Mont Blanc limited-edition Octavian from 1993 made £1,750 and another limited-edition pen from the same firm, a Louis XIV from 1994, went for £1,700.

Leading article, page 21

Fasting hermit is tempted by inn's lasagne and chips

By RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

A HERMIT who aimed to fast for 40 days on a hill above Loch Lomond managed only 27 before staggering down to a hotel and ordering lasagne and chips.

The bearded and bedraggled hermit had set up his tent on Benlomond Hill, Central Scotland, where temperatures are below freezing at night and barely creep above 9C (48F) during the day, to spend his time in meditation and prayer. He told the staff of Rowardennan Hotel that he was a monk from Scandinavia and gave his name as Father Ouchterlony. They were so worried by his starved appearance that they called an ambulance.

Sharon Johnston, the manager, said the middle-aged man was wearing a heavy jumper, jeans and a light jacket when he arrived on the hotel doorstep earlier this week. "He obviously had not washed for some days. He was

a horrible colour and looked at death's door."

"We gave him a bowl of soup and a bit of bread, but he began to feel even more ill. I think it may have been his body rejecting the food. The ambulance arrived and they led him out to it, but he returned after he felt better and ate a lasagne and chips."

She said the hermit, who spoke good English, seemed distressed that he had failed to keep his fast for 40 days, the time spent by Christ in the wilderness, and left disconsolately to spend the night in a youth hostel.

"It was really strange," she said. "He was trying to get closer to God, those were his words. We do get a lot of these hermits in the summer, but never usually at this time of year. I think they must be mad."

The hermit later returned to the hills to collect his belongings and it is believed that he has left the area. Police Sergeant Kevin Findlater, of Balfour, said: "It's an old hermit-type scenario. He obviously felt the need to do this. His condition was not as bad as it was first thought, but he did well to last this long without food. He must have been in a valley near water."

An ambulance service spokesman said the hermit had told the ambulance crew that doctors were no use to him. "There was nothing medically wrong with him and he did not want to travel with us to hospital, so there was nothing we could do."

Although no precise figures exist, increasing numbers of men and women are thought to be seeking lives of solitude in a reaction to the materialism of the late 20th century. Some are infected by "millennium fever", a conviction that the turn of the century will witness the Second Coming of Christ or even Armageddon.

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مَكْذَا مِنْ الْأَصْلِ

SATURDAY OCTOBER 5 1996

CAR 96

5

The competition-beating XK8 is pure Jaguar, says Kevin Eason

So cool, it could have been Lyons-made

Right price, right
pace, right time:
a drive in the big
cat's new sports
car can only
silence the critics

The scope for error was vast. Bob Dover knows that living with a legend is all very well, but the expectations are high when the wraps come off every new Jaguar.

Sir William Lyons built one of the most famous names in the motoring world with a succession of ground-breaking designs to create some of the most desirable cars of all time. Trouble is that the legacy of legend can be hard to bear in a rougher world when the gap between the competition is razor thin.

But Mr Dover can sleep easily in his bed tonight, for the XK8 is a car that Sir William would have approved of. Jaguar has found the perfect balance between the grand tourer and nimble sports car ... and at a bargain-basement price that will set the competition on its ears.

All Sir William's cars were value-for-money, and the XK8 is no different: £47,950 for the coupe, between £32,000 and £35,000 cheaper than BMW, Mercedes or Aston Martin rivals offering equivalent performance and equipment.

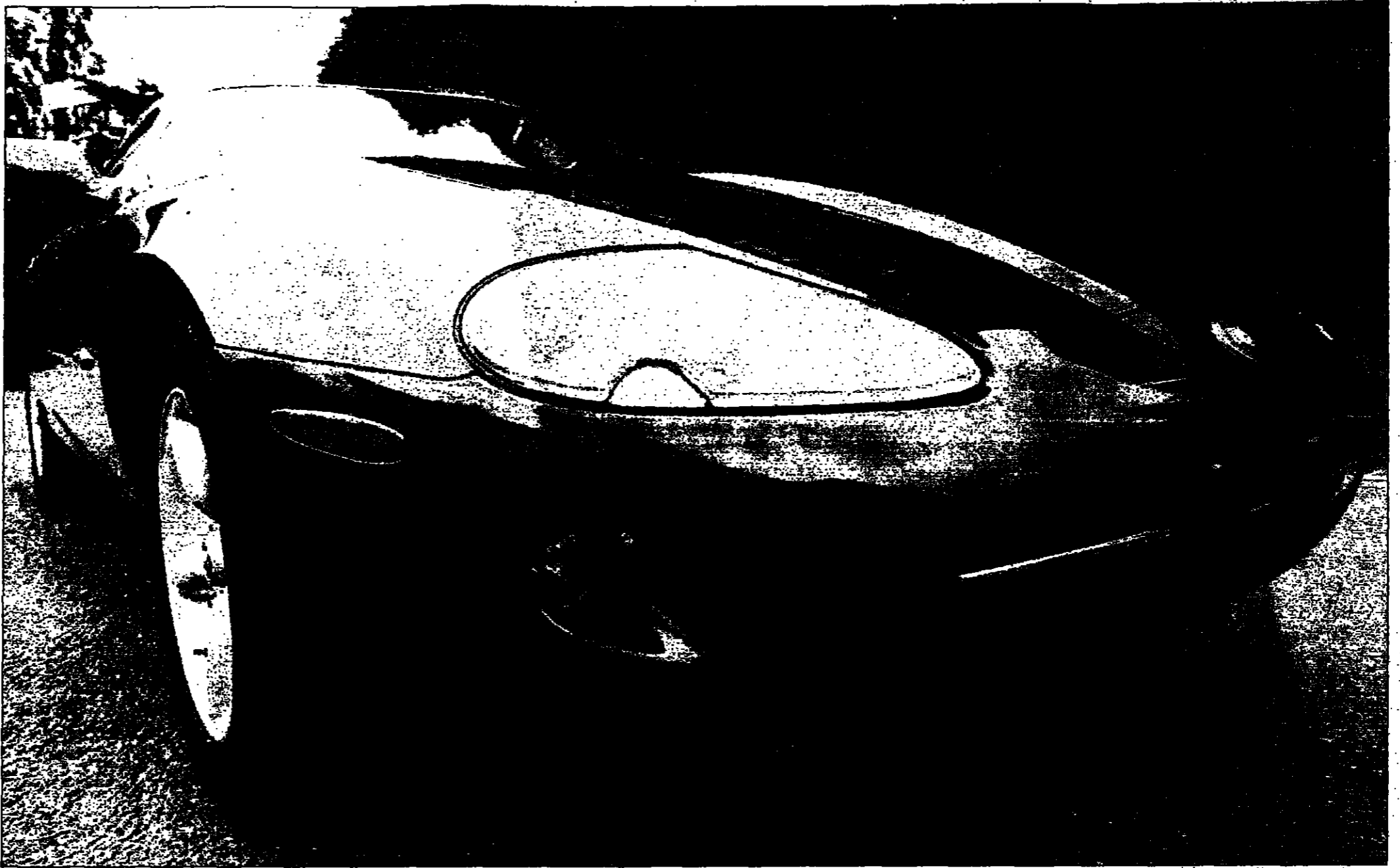
The XK8 was the most demanding programme yet set for Jaguar by its Ford owner because it had to be delivered from concept to finished car in 30 months. In fact, the engineering team came in three months ahead of schedule — a cost saving of about £30 million — and they surpassed every tough target set on quality to make this the best-built Jaguar ever, according to Nick Scheele, Jaguar's chairman. This is a British car that could set Japanese standards for reliability and quality, he says.

levels which could never be achieved on the outgoing XJS.

Because XK8 is based on the old XJS platform, worries ran high that the car would be little more than a revamp of the old barge. The XJS has been Jaguar's best-selling sports car, but it had 20 years of production and, in truth, was as unlovely as a car can get.

With more flying buttresses than the average cathedral. Any carry-over would have destroyed the XK8's chances. In fact, Dover, XK8's chief engineer, says that the car is 80 per cent new, 10 per cent from the XJ saloons and only about 10 per cent — essentially the platform — from the XJS.

At the heart of the changes is a new power-train which is as much a step forward as anything to have come from Jaguar in its history. Jaguar has had only three generations of engine since 1948, all six and 12-cylinder power-packs. The fourth generation departs radically from history in that it is built outside the company — by Ford in Bridgend though designed entirely in-house — and that it is a V8, which is refined, effortless and



The bonnet diving down to the E-Type style grille is as distinctive a piece of imagery as anything currently on the road. Beneath lies an all-new V8 which proves refined, effortless and powerful

powerful with astonishing acceleration in the mid-range — the place you need it when you want to overtake or pull through tricky uphill bends. Dover reckons the torque, or pulling power, to feed in as soon as the throttle is pushed and there is no doubt that they got it right.

There is no manual gearchange, because Jaguar says that there is no demand. No wonder, because the new five-speed automatic transmission is so smooth and efficient that changes up or down are barely noticed.

While other carmakers have added sequential semi-automatic gearboxes — so the driver pushes forward to change up and back to go down — as the manual alternative in an auto box, Jaguar has stuck resolutely to its J-gate system. It was the right decision because it is so easy to use, the stick simply pushed from second to third and so on. Unlike a sequential change, the driver always knows what gear the car is in because of the location of the gearstick.



Traditional interior comforts feature a magical sound system

Not that even a run of tough and twisting roads needed much gear-changing on first test, such is the flexibility of the new power-train. Second will take the car up to almost 90mph, the V8 growing gently under the long, flared bonnet. Even when working the car hard, the ride is stable but with enough feedback through the wheel to allow the driver to feel sports-car responses. Where the

old XJS wallowed, the XK8 springs into action, turning sharply and accurately, the ride always predictable and sure-footed.

Part of that responsiveness comes from a much-improved body and chassis, which is 25 per cent stiffer than the XJS so that there is no flexing of metal through bumps and lumps. Add to that the sort of ride you would expect to feel in a Jaguar and the car becomes

one of the most enjoyable to drive in any price bracket, not least because the company has retained the virtues prized most by its traditional buyers.

Forget criticism you might have read that XK8 is too bulky and too like its distant and also Ford-owned cousin, the Aston Martin DB7. I defy anyone to tell me that the XK8 does not look fabulous, particularly as a convertible. The

bonnet diving down to the E-Type style grille is as distinctive a piece of imagery as anything currently on the road, as you will discover when you see an XK8 appear in your rear-view mirror.

Inside, the XK8 offers the traditional comforts: wood and tasteful leather, a restful but clear set of dials ... and one new option which blasts the opposition: a 240-watt, ten-speaker sound system tailored

to the XK8's acoustics by Harmoni-Kardon, the American specialists. After a windy rattling session with Messrs Elgar, Saint-Saens and Sting, the system catapulted itself from Jaguar option to a "must have" for me.

That touch of extra magic — rarely found among even the most expensive cars — speaks volumes for Jaguar. Other carmakers could produce a valid argument on behalf of the cars competing with the XK8 in an almost overcrowded marketplace. Mercedes could argue for the logic of its engineering, BMW for its reliability, Porsche for its sporting heritage.

But marques rarely appeal to the heart in the way that Jaguar does. The engineering of the XK8 is not just the best to have come out of Coventry in the 60 years since the business was founded, but the car is covered in tiny details, touches which make the driver and passenger feel special as soon as they clutch the keys.

Bob Dover's brief said the XK8 had to be "sensuous, instantly desirable, exhilarating and stirring emotions". It is and it does.

JAGUAR XK8

Engine: 4-litre AJ-V8 developing 290 brake horse power through five-speed automatic gearbox driving rear wheels. Equipped with traction control.

Performance: 0 to 60mph in 6.4 seconds (6.7 convertible), top speed limited to 156mph (154).

Economy: Fuel consumption, 22.9mpg average (23.3 convertible).

Dimensions: length 4,760mm, width 2,015mm. Weight 2,588kg.

Equipment: power steering, anti-lock brakes, airbags, remote locking, alarm immobiliser, tilt steering wheel, air conditioning, steering wheel audio controls, 17in alloy wheels. Convertible has powered foldaway roof.

Price: Coupé £47,950; convertible £54,950.

E-TYPE V XK8

They are soul-sisters, a quarter of a century apart, writes Sue Baker. I drove them minutes apart, and it was a time-war of familiarity. Stepping out of an XK8 and into a newly restored E-Type underlined striking similarities and unexpected differences.

The new Jaguar is the E-Type for the Nineties, evocatively retro-styled, still a sleek and sultry big cat, but fatter and less feral.

The model that is the XK8's historical benchmark has more front and less behind, with a body dominated by its famously phallic bonnet and encasing a narrower, sparser cabin. But it still manages to rival the newcomer for headroom and beats it for visibility.

The E-Type tested is a Series II, 4.2-litre 2+2. When it was new in 1970 it cost £2,708. It was shared by two brothers who drove it hard and with little concern for its future as a covetable classic.

When owner Ray Atwell bought it eight years ago for £4,000, it was a rusty non-runner, unused for a decade. It has just emerged from a total restoration, which cost conservatively £25,000, not including hundreds of hours of preparation work by its owner. It is now effectively a 1970s car built in the 1990s, with body panels rust-protected and fitted to a far higher standard than when new.

Driving both cars back-to-back was as much a reminder of how good a car the E-Type was in its day as an endorsement of the XK8's status as E-Type reinvented.

The height of the two cars is similar, but from the inside the XK8 feels more enclosing. It has a higher waistline and the window area feels smaller, giving the new Jaguar a slightly more claustrophobic



The quarter-century difference belies some striking similarities

Model: Series II fixed-head coupe 2+2.
Engine: 4.2 litre, six-cylinder, 265 bhp.
Dimensions: wheelbase: 8ft 9in, length: 15ft 4in, width: 5ft 6in.
Top speed: 139mph.
0-60: 7.4 secs.
Consumption: avg. 18-20 mpg; touring, 25 mpg.
Insurance: £200-£250 on an agreed-value, limited-mileage (3,000 miles) annually classic car policy.
Original Price: £2,708.71
Value: £25,000.

maple veneers are stained so dark and lacquered so heavily as to be indistinguishable from high-grade plastic, and its leather is perfection.

Where the XK8's ride is a muscular glide, distancing the driver from any physical discomforts from the road surface, the E-Type's is more informative, communicating what is underfoot without relaying much of its harshness. For a sports car built 26 years ago, the ride is remarkably good.

Both cars share a similarly mesmerising presence on the road. Wherever I drove it, the XK8's sleek, sensuous shape swivelled heads in its wake. But they were being turned more by its novelty, days ahead of its official release.

The E-Type commanded just as much attention. But no novelty here — it was simply in warm admiration of an unsurpassably, dramatically beautiful car.

If an XK8 driving past in the year 2022 still earns as many second looks as a renovated E-Type does today, only then can it truly pass as a worthy successor.

DB7 V XK8



Gorgeous looks, but at a price

Model: Aston Martin DB7 3.2 litre
Engine: supercharged in-line 353bhp six-cylinder.
0-60: 5.7 secs.
Top speed: 166mph.
Dimensions: length: 4,646mm, width: 1,830mm.
Price: Coupé: £82,500, convertible £89,950

The similarity between the Aston Martin DB7 and the XK8 could be too close for comfort — for Aston, anyway. Those curved DB7 haunches and long overhangs tell the story of its heritage, cloned from the Jaguar XJS platform and with a straight-six supercharged 3.2-litre developed from a Jaguar race engine.

Performance figures are roughly similar, and, of course, an Aston is strong on traditional wood and leather like the Jag. But it would be too simple to say the cars are the same. The power characteristics are very different and the Aston feels tauter and somehow smaller than the XK8, even though the dimensions are similar.

Being part of the same Ford family should not be a problem, although the XK8's value for money could be trying for Aston. Look for some Aston derivatives soon to try to catch the eye.

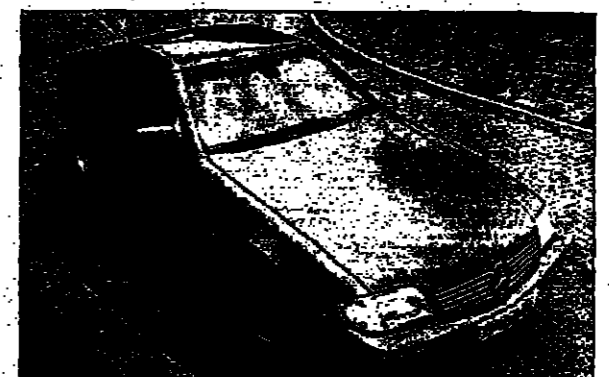
MERCEDES SL500

Next to an XK8, Mercedes SL looks expensive, fat ... and damned ugly. The years have not been kind to the SL, and with every passing birthday, it looks more and more like the starlet who piled on the pounds and sprinted past her sell-by date.

The SL looked a stunner at launch — but then there was barely anything else on the road to compare it with apart from the XJS, which was already so old it made the SL look positively anorexic and feel as nimble as George Best in his heyday.

Now Best would be hard-pressed to run a traffic light, never mind a full ninety minutes, while Mercedes answered the competition by loading more into the SL's bigger engines, more gadgets, more everything, except for a stereo fitted as standard.

The result in the SL500, which offers almost similar performance to an XK8, is of a bloated, muscle-bound motor — like being lugged by one of the Gladiators rather than wafted and beguiled. Acceleration is bludgeoning, but the sound feedback from the Merc's V8 is industrial rather than seductive. However, the handling is as safe and sound as you would expect from a Mercedes: huge rear tyres spreading themselves all over the road, seemingly defying the gods to overcome their sticking power, and the traction control system to trick it into a flurry of wheel spins.



By comparison, it's both overweight and overpriced

Model: Mercedes SL500.
Engine: 5-litre, 32-valve V8 developing 326bhp through five-speed automatic transmission driving rear wheels.
0-62: 6.5 secs.
Top speed: 155mph (electronically limited).
Consumption: 17.7mpg in town.
Dimensions: length 4,470mm, width 1,812mm.
Price: £80,700 basic

a busy day, but that does not make the model more lovable. In fact, the SL — a car born in the 1980s when big was better — looks forlorn in the Nineties when swooping shapes and curves are in vogue and when its little sister, the SLK, looks cute and cuddly.

There is another thing if you are deciding about buying a new sports car: the SL range starts at £57,700 for the 2.8-litre and zooms up to £97,450 for the SL500AMG and you still have to buy your own stereo.

Lord Chief Justice sets liberal tone with initiatives on human rights and life sentences

Bingham aims to banish mystery of jurors' room

By Frances Gibb, Legal Correspondent

THE new Lord Chief Justice yesterday paved the way for the first investigation into the secrets of the jury room, saying that he was in favour of allowing research into how jurors reached their verdicts.

In his first public appearance as the most senior serving judge, Lord Bingham of Cornhill also made clear that he would lead judicial opposition to the Home Secretary's plans for tougher sentencing, expected in the Queen's Speech.

Lord Bingham is the first senior judge publicly to support a change in the law to allow research into how juries operate. The change was steadfastly opposed by his two predecessors, Lord Taylor of Gossforth and Lord Lane, although it is supported by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, and was recommended by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice in 1993.

Predecessors feared that it would encourage appeals based on what jurors did or said while considering a verdict. But Lord Bingham said yesterday: "The time has

come, without opening the door to these real dangers, to enable some very serious, real and objective — and anonymous — research into the way in which juries reach their decisions."

At present there was ignorance about how jurors reacted to judges' directions and how they would react to knowing previous convictions, he said.

In his first press conference since taking office four months ago, Lord Bingham, 63 next week, set a liberal tone for his tenure. He urged incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law, ending of the Home Secretary's role in fixing life sentences, and the end of mandatory life sentences.

He denied that judges were too lenient, although he accepted that that was the "public perception". He was, however, in favour of giving the Attorney-General wider powers to appeal when sentences were considered insufficient.

Lord Bingham stressed that he would be no less tough on the Government's proposals

for sentencing changes than Lord Taylor, who retired because of ill health. "I very much hope that the Home Secretary and Parliament will leave the judges with their sentencing discretion for the reasons rehearsed by my predecessor," he said.

Judges, who had heard all the witnesses and were aware of complex issues, and the atmosphere generated in a case, "should not be told they have to do this or that or the other in a particular case, willy-nilly."

At the same time, Lord Bingham indicated that he wanted to stop any suggestion of a power battle between judges and government with judges taking on the Government through judicial review decisions. "Judges have gone to great lengths to make it clear that they are not usurping the decision-making powers of officials and that they bring no political axe to grind."

He cautioned judges against speaking out in a way that could "undermine their reputation for impartiality and neutrality". But he said that

they had a part to play in discussions about matters, such as sentencing, within their field of expertise.

Lord Bingham rejected any move to stop defendants acting for themselves and cross-examining their victims. "The public would be deeply offended to be told 'you must employ a lawyer,'" he said. It would be seen as the profession trying to entrench its monopolies still further.

On Mr Howard's proposals for mandatory life sentences

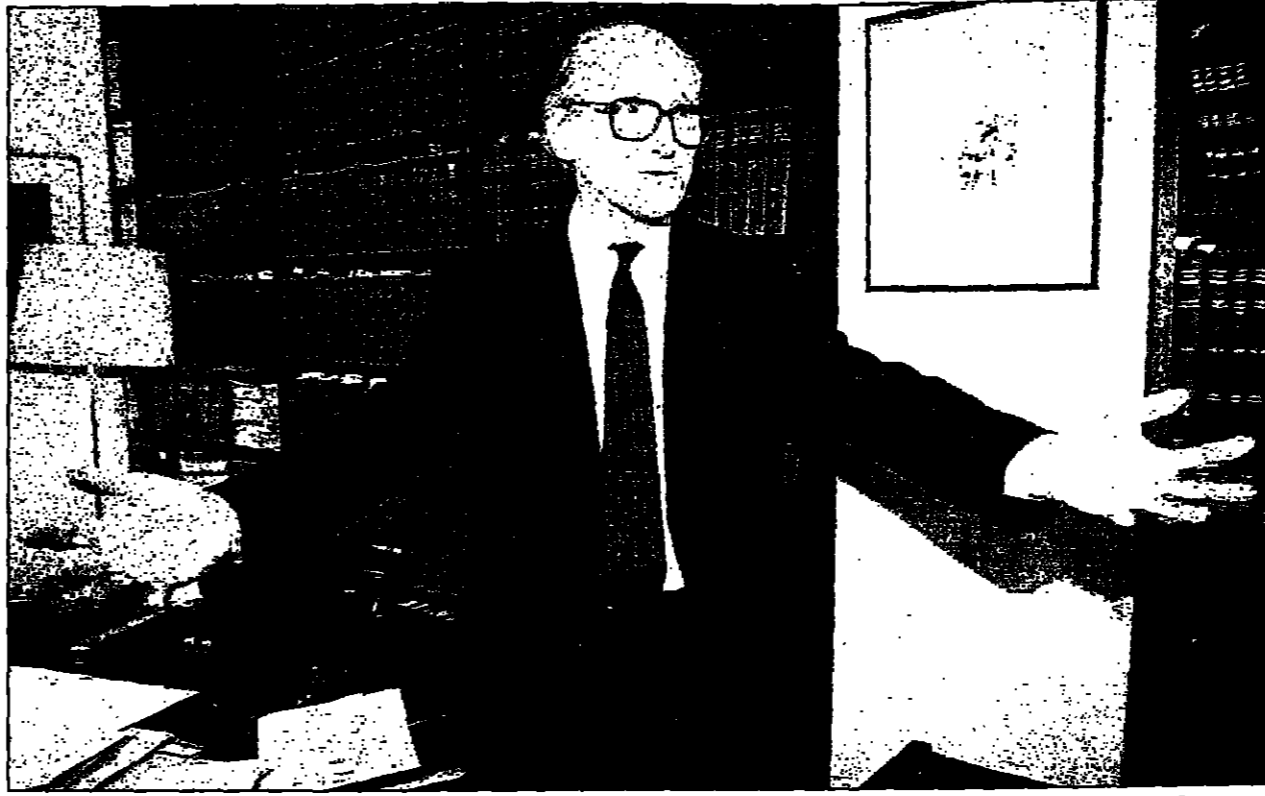
for second-time rapists and violent offenders, and minimum sentences for repeat burglars and drug offenders, Lord Bingham said that there was no difference between Lord Taylor's views and his own, although he might have expressed them differently. "The interests of justice are served by allowing judges, to the maximum extent, to tailor a sentence to the circumstances of a particular case, which they are in a unique position to judge."

The case for ending mandatory life sentences for murder had, in his view, been made convincingly. On the Home Secretary's role in fixing the tariff — the period a prisoner jailed for life spends in jail — he preferred the system as applied to "discretionary" life prisoners under which the Parole Board decides the release date.

Lord Bingham said that he would be unhappy if Michael Howard's "two strikes and you're out" proposals found favour, unless there was some

qualification which enabled judges to depart from the rule in appropriate cases, giving their reasons. He rejected the notion that judges were out of touch with society, saying that there had been a big change from a few years ago when "judges were characterised as bloodthirsty old men".

Now they were seen as "liberal pinkos who never punished anyone". "My own view is that neither of these is close to the truth," he said.



Lord Bingham in his office at the High Court. He will not shy away from opposing Tory sentencing plans

NEWS BRIEF

Newspaper libelled Bill Cash in satire

A newspaper apologised and agreed to pay substantial libel damages to Bill Cash, MP for Stafford, over the use of his name in a satirical article. The piece, in *The Scotsman*, depicted a "William Cash-Purchase MP" as "cynical, corrupt and dishonest". Mr Cash's solicitor, Richard Martin, told Mr Justice French in the High Court.

Sperm case ends

Sir Stephen Brown, President of the High Court Family Division, reserved judgment on the submission by a 30-year-old Midlands widow for the right to have a baby using her late husband's sperm.

Russells funeral

The funerals of Lin and Megan Russell, killed at Chilenden, Kent, in July, will be held today at Dolbeam, near Caernarfon. The procession to church will be led by Shaun Russell and daughter Josie, who survived the attack.

Plane loses wheel

A cargo plane made an emergency landing at Belfast airport when a wheel from its undercarriage was found on the runway after it had taken off from Coventry. The plane landed safely and there were no injuries.

Long haul flight

Birdwatchers were out in force yesterday after a black and white warbler, a rare North American visitor to Britain blown here by westerly gales, was spotted in a garden near Beachy Head, East Sussex.

£10m Beauty

A £10 million musical production of the Walt Disney cartoon *Beauty and the Beast* will open in London next year. The show, which opens on May 13 at the Dominion theatre, is in its third year on Broadway.

Top botanist dies

Professor Thomas ap Iwan, 65, head of Cambridge University's Department of Plant Sciences, died in a collision with a car as he cycled to his home in Little Eversden, Cambridgeshire. He was one of Britain's leading botanists.

Fire rocks band

The Scottish rock band Runrig were "absolutely devastated" after their management offices and fan club in Aberdeen were destroyed in an early morning fire. Plans to release an album on Monday are unaffected.

Soccer case witness is remanded

By Lin Jenkins

A businessman who made match-fixing allegations against three footballers was yesterday accused of offering to fail to appear to give evidence against one of them in exchange for money. Chris Vincent was remanded in custody for a week when he appeared at Aldershot Magistrates Court, charged with attempting to pervert the course of justice.

Mr Vincent, 38, of Holyport, Berkshire, is a chief prosecution witness in the case of Bruce Grobbelaar, the former Liverpool and Southampton goalkeeper and Zimbabwe international, and the former Wimbledon players John Fashanu and Dutch-born goalkeeper Hans Segers.

The three footballers and Heng Suan Lim, a Malaysian businessman, are to be tried on match-rigging allegations at Winchester Crown Court in January. They deny the charges and are on bail pending the hearing.

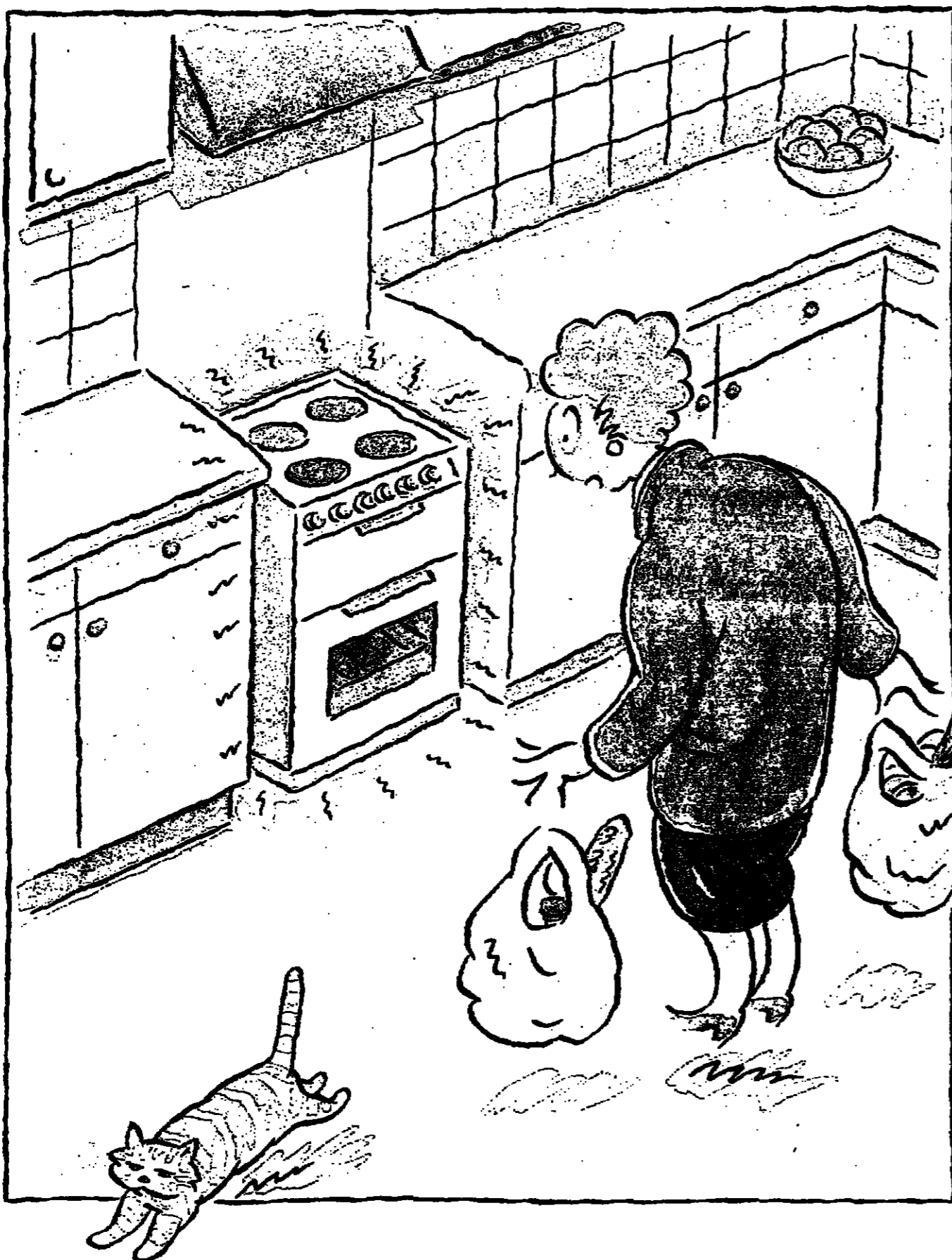
Life insurance over the phone in less than ten minutes? That'll be the day.

Two hundred years after the invention of life insurance, only one company can insure most people over the phone in less than ten minutes. As for the rest, well, they'll be along in... er... in... Well, give them time.

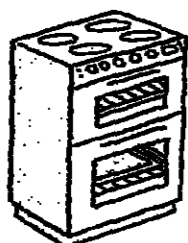
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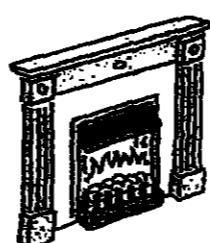
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فكرنا من الأصل

Wests' house will be ground to dust to obliterate all traces

By MICHAEL HORSNELL

POLICE are once again on guard outside 25 Cromwell Street, the house in Gloucester where Frederick and Rosemary West murdered and buried their victims. On Monday morning, work will start on demolishing the house, brick by brick, and officials are anxious to prevent souvenir hunters making off with mementoes.

The bricks, rubble and masonry will be ground to dust, and the wood burnt to ashes. Gloucester council is spending more than £120,000 to rid the city of its most unwanted tourist attraction, where the bodies of nine young women were found in 1994.

The council has paid £40,000 to the Official Solicitor, who sold the three-storey property on behalf of five of the couple's children, and a similar sum for the adjoining house. The demolition, after which the site will be filled in and concreted over, will cost £27,000. The council says it will spend an additional £15,000 on an indepen-

additional £15,000 on an independ-



dent consultation study to find out what victims' relatives and the community wish to see in place of the house. A memorial garden is said to be a "possibility, if not a frontrunner". A change in the street's name is also planned.

Jon Holmes, the council leader and a local solicitor, said: "The rubble, brick and masonry will be ground to dust. The timber will be taken to a secure place and burnt to ashes. We do not want a Berlin Wall scenario with people taking away macabre souvenirs. If the house stayed there it would attract the wrong sort of person."

The much-photographed

wrought iron sign that once hung on the house wall is at the centre of a legal tussle and is retained by police. Senior members of the family are understood to have laid claim to the sign, which was made by West.

His wife is serving life imprisonment in Durham jail after being convicted of ten murders. West hanged himself in his remand cell at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, on New Year's Day 1995. West died intestate and his wife forfeited her claim to any benefit from his estate after her conviction.

conviction. Their house was never put on the open market. However the Official Solicitor, Peter Harris, who was responsible for managing West's estate on behalf of his five children aged under 18, let it be known that it was for sale. There was only one inquiry — from the local authority.

Apart from the house, the only other items of real value in West's estate are 120 tape recordings made by police of their interviews with him, together with 20 hours of tapes recorded in prison by his original solicitor, Howard Ogden, and a 100-page memoir he wrote in prison.

Their value lies in the information they provided for the officially-approved book on Frederick West, written by the former *Times* journalist, Geoffrey Wansell. He was commissioned by Mr Harris, as guardian of the children's interests, to write West's life story. *An Evil Love: The Life of Frederick West* was published last month by Hodder Headline, which paid a six-figure sum for the rights. It goes into paperback soon and could net the children, who will share the proceeds with Mr Wansell, up to £500,000.



The "house of horrors", right, in Cromwell Street, Gloucester, will be pulled down brick by brick over the next three weeks



Positive image: this portrait, by Chief Petty Officer Paul Cowpe, won first prize in the monochrome section of the annual Royal Navy photographic awards, presented in London yesterday

Barclay twins lose legal fight for privacy

BY RUSSELL JENKINS

THE Barclay brothers yesterday lost their High Court challenge after complaining that a BBC2 report had invaded their privacy. David and Frederick Barclay, 61, who own *The European* and the Ritz, had sought a judicial review into a decision by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission not to investigate the complaint they made after John Sweeney, of the media programme *The Spin*, turned up uninvited at their Channel Island home last year seeking an interview. The commission had said that, under present laws, that had no power to investigate until after the programme had been broadcast.

Mr Justice Sedley ruled against their application, which had been fiercely contested by both the commission and the BBC. The corporation had feared that it could hamper documentary-makers before their programmes were shown. The judge said in a written judgment that the disputed Section 143 of the 1990 Broadcasting Act unambiguously limited the power of the commission to adjudicate on complaints about infringements of privacy.

The judge said there were no general constraints upon invasions of privacy, in law. The individual had no effective remedy, before a national authority if his right to privacy was violated.

"For those who consider that privacy is a right which needs protection in English law, and for those concerned with the conformity of the United Kingdom's law with the standards set out in the European Convention on Human Rights, the argument will not end here." The Barclay twins were refused leave to appeal.

When, in August last year, *The Spin* asked for an interview with the brothers, on their ownership of *The European* and their fortified home which was being built on Brecqhou, the programme was refused. Mr Sweeney arrived on the island in a dinghy armed with a radio microphone and had to be removed. His researches were later used in an article in *The Observer* and broadcast on *The Spin*.

Mark Shaw, for the commission, told the judge: "No doubt there was an invasion but Parliament has taken the view that a line has to be drawn and that line is after there has been a broadcast." The Barclays' application, if allowed, would have amounted to a gagging order on broadcasters, he said.

Sunken trawler 'was spying on Soviet submarines for Navy'

By MICHAEL EVANS

A BRITISH fishing trawler that sank off Norway with the loss of 36 crew members more than 20 years ago might have collided with a Soviet submarine while spying for the Royal Navy, a television documentary will claim next week.

An official inquiry into the sinking of the *Gaul* concluded that the fishing trawler sank after capsizing in heavy Arctic seas in a storm in 1974. However, according to ITV's *Network First*, new research provides evidence that the trawl-

er had been engaged in spying on Soviet naval activities off the North Cape of Norway where Soviet submarines operated during the Cold War.

The programme, to be screened next Tuesday at 10.40pm, claims there was a high-level cover-up to avoid a confrontation between Soviet and British authorities. Yesterday, Max Gold, a solicitor acting for some of the deceased's relatives, called for the Government to come clean about the trawler's role.

Allegations have been made in the past by the relatives that the *Gaul* might have

been caught up in an official spying operation. Former trawler skippers have added to the mystery by claiming to have been recruited by MI6 to spy on the Soviets. One former skipper, Mason Redfearn, claimed in January that during the 1960s and 1970s, British trawlermen photographed Soviet warships under the cover of fishing.

The Royal Navy denied yesterday that the crew members of the *Gaul* had been asked to spy on Soviet warships. The official said the North Cape had been a highly sensitive area, and during the Cold

War British trawlermen would voluntarily provide intelligence of Soviet naval activity to the Navy when they returned home because they felt it was in the national interest.

"But they were never tasked to do this either by the Royal Navy or by British intelligence," the Navy spokesman said. He said there was no evidence that the *Gaul* crew had been passing intelligence to the Navy or MI6.

The Navy official said there had been no suggestion at the time that the fishing trawler had been hit by a submarine.

adding that the inquiry had rightly concluded that the *Gaul* was overwhelmed by heavy seas. However, the ITV film claims that on its last voyage the trawler spent three days in Soviet waters close to Soviet submarine bases and well away from its normal fishing ground.

Mr Gold urged the Government to open talks with its Russian counterparts to identify the body of a man in a snow-covered grave. Three unidentified seamen were found on the Arctic coastline two months after the *Gaul* disappeared. Two are thought to have been British.

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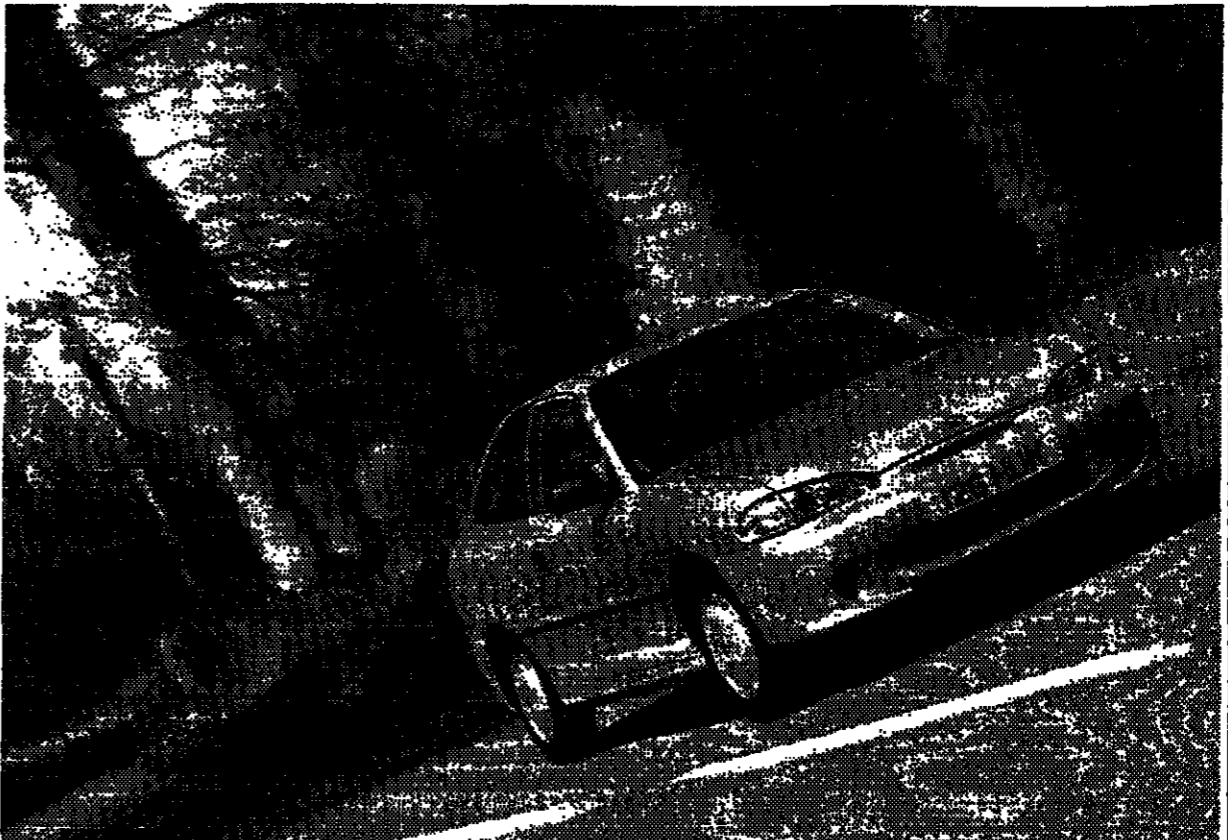
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مكذبا من الأصل

Women priests bring Church new harmony

By Ruth Gledhill, Religion Correspondent

WOMEN priests, far from dividing the Church of England, have helped to foster a new spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness, according to the early results of a year-long study.

A fundamental loyalty to the Church has meant that even the most hardline opponents have made efforts to overcome their hostility and to be friends with newly ordained women. Less than a third of the 1,000 priests expected to resign over the issue have done so, although funding was set aside to award compensation to them.

Early findings of the study, by the Edward King Institute, a voluntary organisation, suggest that the Church of England may have been strengthened by the admission of women to its priestly orders. One hundred male and female priests, as well as lay people, Church officials and opponents of women priests, were asked to keep journals for a year after the first ordinations at Bristol Cathedral in spring 1994.

The journals were assessed at consultations this week at Trevelyan College, Durham University. The final report is due shortly and the results will appear in the January edition of the institute's journal, *Ministry*.

Canon David Durston, chancellor of Salisbury Cathedral and one of four people leading the consultations, said: "There are many people in the Church who are or were upset about women priests, but who are still loyal to the Church. That loyalty has been a very

important factor in holding the Church together through this period of change. Some people saw this change as disruptive, but now the change has been made and many have experienced the ministry of women priests, they are content."

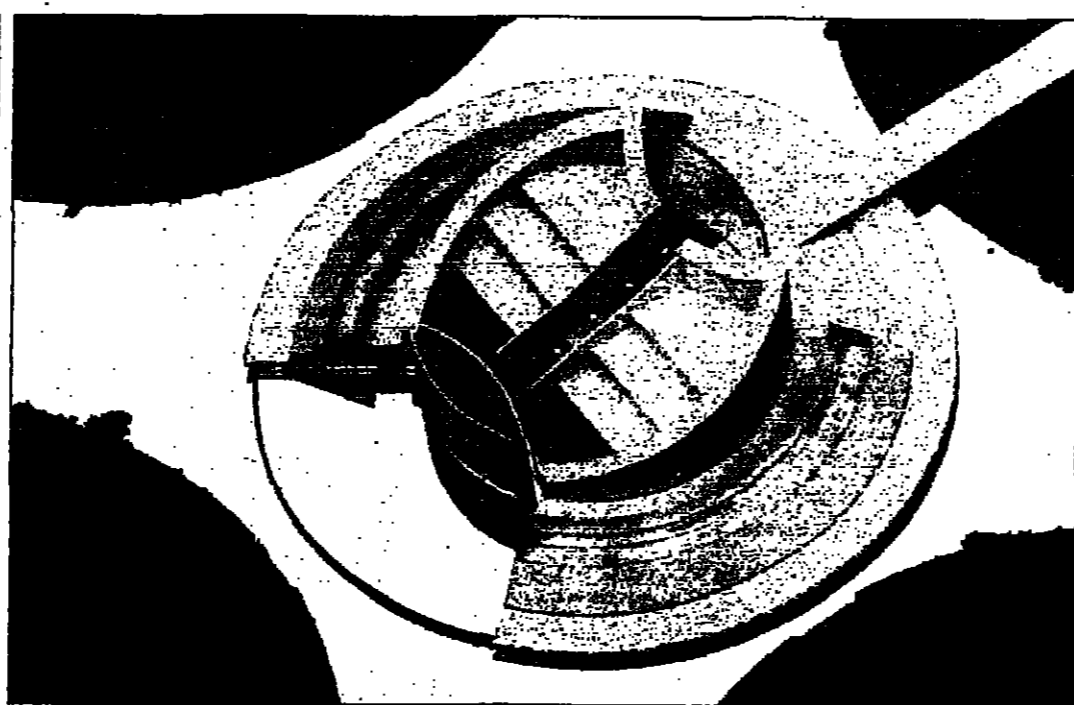
Nearly 2,000 women have been ordained, although fewer than half are stipendiary. This means that, on average, one in six parishes will have the services of a stipendiary or non-stipendiary woman priest.

Canon Durston said: "There has been a release of energy and a flowering of gifts on the part of women priests. For many, the ordination opened opportunities to new areas of service. This has been appreciated enormously by their parishes."

He said that the consultations had produced surprising evidence of affinity between men and women priests. Instead of becoming implacable enemies, these clergy used their Christian principles to work hard to forge friendships, in order to live in harmony with their differences. "We have discovered friendships that are almost deeper because of the divide," Canon Durston said.

He said, however, that the study had found that great unhappiness remained, in particular on the part of opponents of women priests who did not want to leave the Church but now felt "aliens" in what they had once called their home.

At Your Service, Weekend, page 17



The building at the cross's centre will house a chapel, educational equipment and a museum

Millennium 'cathedral' planned to celebrate early British saints

By Ruth Gledhill

A CENTRE for religious history and learning in the shape of a Celtic cross is being planned for the millennium to celebrate the parts played by the British saints, Cuthbert and Bede, in bringing Christianity to England. Funding from the Millennium Commission is being sought to help to finance the £53 million Northumberland Cross "cathedral".

The scheme, submitted to the commission by Northumberland County Council, is one of the most ambitious and spectacular conceived to celebrate the millennium. According to *Church Times*, the building "would form the jewel of a giant St Cuthbert's



The cross is formed by lakes

Cross, with four large lakes forming the arms". The building at the centre of the cross will contain an exhibition, a museum, a chapel and a room for quiet reflection, to be called the Gospels Vault. It will

also house the latest in computer equipment, with a live link to schools and other institutions in the area. It will be entered through a sculpted granite podium, and at the centre of the building will be a cathedral-style nave, its inspiration drawn from early church architecture.

The county council has already set aside land worth £6.5 million at Crumlington. Visitors are expected to number 350,000 a year. Ken Morris, the council's managing director, said: "This cathedral would have enormous relevance."

"We feel our scheme is exciting and relevant to the millennium, particularly with it being the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Christ."

Credo

Foursquare truth comes full circle

Ian Goodhardt

The end: and then the beginning again.

This just about sums up the Jewish festival of Simchat Torah, which occurs tomorrow. It is the day upon which the annual cycle of reading the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, is concluded and immediately recommenced.

Beginnings and endings are an intrinsic part of life. Life itself begins and ends, and within each life relationships, jobs, projects of all sorts are embarked upon and concluded, often only to begin again. The rabbis, as always, have advice: "All beginnings are difficult"; and again, "It all depends on the conclusion". While the early stages of any venture are especially demanding, as one

which follows any dramatic change they are all hard, and the wisdom of the ages is there to sympathise and encourage.

But sometimes it is the other way about. The beginning is already a distant memory. What we seek now is some light at the end of the tunnel. When a worker is involved in a large project, lost in the detail with no clear sense why it is worth continuing, those other words come ringing towards him: "There are few points just for trying. It all depends on a successful conclusion. Persistence is the key. Stay focused on the goal you set."

Almost everything in our life begins and ends. Almost everything. For the reading of the Bible, there is no ending. The

struggles to get to grips with a new way of behaving or new skills, the value of that venture lies in what it eventually produces. There is deep wisdom in these two apparently banal aphorisms. When a child struggles with all the complexities of life, falls down and has to get up and try again and again, how comforting are those words: "Don't worry, all beginnings are difficult." A first driving lesson, the first week of a new job, the early years of a marriage or, more sadly, the early part of widowhood, the new mode of life

few days without hearing the uplifting words of The Book was anathema to early Jewish leaders.

Ian Goodhardt is Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation in Leeds



Macleod supporters call talks in Wee Frees row

By Shirley English

A THIRD of ministers in the Free Church of Scotland will meet for emergency talks on Monday to discuss the "shameful treatment" of the Reverend Donald Macleod.

They are said to be angered by the "ludicrous and contradictory" decision of the church's Commission of Assembly to investigate Professor Macleod for heresy. At the same hearing this week, the Commission cleared three ministers of allegations that they had plotted against Professor Macleod, who teaches at the Free Church College in Edinburgh and was cleared of indecent assault charges in June.

The emergency meeting, thought to be taking place in Perth, has increased speculation of an imminent split within the 153-year-old Presbyterian church. The division appears to be between the fundamentalists, represented



Macleod: facing inquiry over heresy claims

by the alleged conspirators, and the modernisers, who back Professor Macleod.

Yesterday the Rev Alex MacDonald, minister at Buccleuch and Greyfriars Free Church in Edinburgh, who called the meeting, said there was no strict agenda: "No one envisaged that the Commission would come up with anything so ludicrous

and contradictory. Things are serious. There are no proposals for a split, but there is nothing ruled out whatsoever."

Around 30 of the 100 ministers in the "Wee Frees" are expected to attend, including Professor Macleod, 55. He said his phone had hardly stopped ringing, since the Commission's decision was made public on Thursday.

"Such following as I have is mainly in the pews, but the brethren have been very strong in their encouragement. The reaction I have had from some is that the lunatics appear to have taken over the asylum."

Professor Hugh Cartwright, one of the three identified by the Commission as ministers who "may have lost the confidence of many in the church", said last night he had never been named as a conspirator nor been involved in a campaign to have Professor Macleod removed from office.

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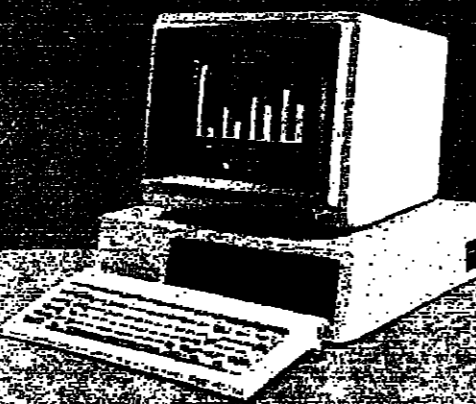


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THE SUNDAY TIMES

The downfall of Jeremy Thorpe



At 6pm on Friday, October 24, Newton met Scott — the troublesome homosexual lover of the Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe — planning to take him onto Exmoor and shoot him. But there was a hitch: Rinka, Scott's great dane bitch, was with him...

Part 3 of the Jeremy Thorpe story — News Review, The Sunday Times tomorrow

Gardens outgrow fitted kitchens in the ideal home

BY RACHEL KELLY
PROPERTY CORRESPONDENT

DEVOTEES of the ideal home have trooped out of the kitchen into the garden. House owners intent on improving their property now add a patio or pergola, rejuvenate the lawn and flower beds or redesign the whole garden rather than install a fitted kitchen, according to a survey yesterday.

The Halifax Building Society said homeowners were becoming greenfingered to improve their standard of living rather than because they were planning to put their properties on the market. "One person's garden improvements could be someone else's garden disaster," a spokesman said. "Clearly our customers are increasingly finding gardening relaxing and enjoyable."

Despite a recovering property market, Central Statistical Office figures show that homeowners are staying put for an average of seven years rather than the five of the

IMPROVEMENTS

Previous figures in brackets	1996	'94	'92
1 double glazing	(1)	(1)	(1)
2 improving garden	(3)	(3)	(3)
3 fitted kitchens	(2)	(2)	(2)
4 new bathroom	(5)	(4)	(4)
5 central heating	(6)	(5)	(5)
6 home security	(4)		

1980s boom. Sales hover around a million a year, compared with two million then. When people move less often they work on longer-term improvements such as gardening, the Halifax said.

The keenest gardeners are in South Wales and the West, where 40 per cent of customers made such improvements, compared with 17 per cent in Scotland. Those selling their homes saw garden improvements as a desirable extra, along with home security, fitted bedrooms and conservatories. Over half of Halifax customers viewed a fitted kitchen, a modern bathroom, double glazing, a garage and a

garden as necessary features of a new home.

The popularity of DIY is illustrated by the 33 per cent of customers who did improvements themselves; 48 per cent used local firms. Homeowners in the South West installed the most fitted bedrooms and conservatories. The South East had the most — 14 per cent — with DIY as a hobby. Fourteen per cent of them spend their spare time putting up shelves.

Northerners had converted the most lofts, the Scots regarded double glazing and central heating as necessities. Londoners and Midlands were keenest on home security and the East had the most extensions. Seventy per cent of customers paid for improvements from savings. Only 14 per cent increased their mortgages.

Gardening, Weekend, page 4
Property, Weekend, pages 11, 12
House Style, Magazine, page 83



The water avens, which were found by wildlife enthusiasts in a meadow to be bulldozed for a new road

Discovery of rare plant in meadow threatened by Heathrow expansion embarrasses BAA

BY NICK NUTTALL

A RARE plant has been found by naturalists in the path of the proposed new Terminal 5 at Heathrow airport to the embarrassment of the developers.

The find challenges claims by BAA that it carried out a rigorous environmental assessment of the area, wildlife groups said yesterday. The plant, a small meadow species called water avens, was believed to be extinct in the Greater London area and possibly the South East.

The discovery of the colony of *Geum rivale*, which grows to about 3 in and

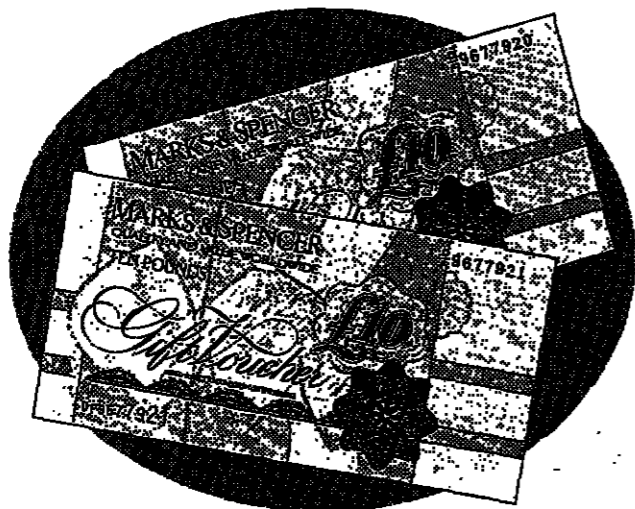
sports pink-purple flowers, was made near the village of Longford by Ralph Gaines of the London Wildlife Trust and Jacqueline Shane, a critic of the proposed terminal, who lives in Richmond. The meadow is due to be bulldozed for a new spur road linking Heathrow to the M25 if the terminal is approved.

Mr Gaines, head of conservation at the trust, part of the national network of county wildlife trusts, said yesterday that BAA had failed to declare the presence of the plant in its environmental submission to the inquiry.

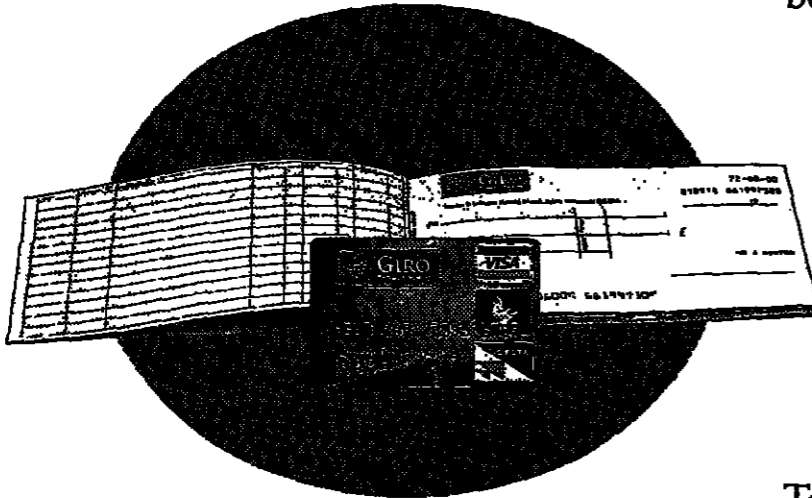
Cowslips, which have declined in

recent years, were also found in the meadow but were absent from the research carried out for BAA by its ecological consultants. BAA said yesterday that it was aware of the colony and denied it had withheld its existence from the inquiry inspector. The road aspects of the proposed Terminal 5 were being submitted separately because it was more a matter for the Department of Transport and a study had begun to find a suitable new site for the plant.

Letters, page 21
Flora Britannica, Weekend, page 28

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Award for
novelist
on Booker
shortlist

BY ERICA WAGNER

ROHINTON MISTRY, the author whose novel *A Fine Balance* has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize, has been awarded a 1996 Commonwealth Writers Prize, worth £10,000.

Announcing the award in Harare, Zimbabwe, Dr Humayun Khan, director of the Commonwealth Foundation, said the book was a worthy winner in a strong field. "It is a novel of power and conviction that cannot fail to engage the reader with its naturalistic exploration of the painful realities of some aspects of Indian society."

Mistry's first book, *Such a Long Journey*, won the prize in 1991 and was also shortlisted for the Booker. He has become the only writer in the history of the prize to have his first and second novels shortlisted.

Alastair Niven, literature director of the Arts Council and a previous judge of the Commonwealth and Booker prizes, speculated as to whether the Commonwealth win would affect the Booker decision. "Speaking as a former judge of the Booker, I know we tried to put out of our mind external considerations."

Books, Weekend, pages 14-15

Man held
on Bondi
killing is
given bail

BY RACHEL BRIDGE

THE man accused of murdering a British tourist on Bondi Beach was yesterday released from prison on bail despite prosecution claims that he was short-tempered and had a "don't give a damn" attitude.

Aaron Martin is alleged to have killed Brian Hagland, 28, as the Londoner returned with his girlfriend from a party in the Sydney resort. After evidence from his mother and sister, Mr Martin was released on bail of \$25,000 (£12,700) on condition that he does not drink alcohol, obeys a curfew from 8pm to 7am and attends regular meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Judge Vince Bruce also ordered that Mr Martin, 22, live with his sister, be accompanied by a relative when he goes out and report to police daily. His mother said: "Deep down he is a kind and gentle person and he has got our support."

The prosecution, which may appeal against bail when Mr Martin reappears in court next month, said that he was attracted to brutal violence and would be a threat to the community if released. Mr Martin's lawyers said that he would be pleading not guilty to murder.

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Labour conference

The time to hesitate is over, Prescott tells floating voters

By JILL SHERMAN
CHIEF POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT



JOHN PRESCOTT put the Labour Party on election footing yesterday with a declaration that "victory is within our grasp after seventeen long years".

In a barnstorming end-of-conference speech, the deputy leader rallied the party faithful, telling them they had only 200 days to ensure that Tony Blair became Prime Minister.

Mr Prescott also announced that ballot papers were being sent out to the party's 400,000 members and 2.6 million affiliated trade unionists to approve the party's draft manifesto. The move follows a conference vote on the document, which won support from 95 per cent of the 1,252 delegates. It also came after a defeat-free vote for the party in which unions and constituency activists presented a united front.

Mixing a strong appeal for unity with jokes about the Tories, he urged Labour supporters and floating voters to get off the sidelines. "The time to hesitate is over. I appeal to you to join us in membership,

join us in campaigning and make a decision."

He recalled the despair of defeat at the last election, saying: "Never, never again." The image of Neil Kinnock conceding defeat at the party's headquarters in Walworth Road would be extinguished only "when we see Tony Blair on the steps of 10 Downing Street, announcing a magnificent Labour victory in the next general election."

Labour wanted only a chance to serve, he said, recalling a phrase of John Smith's at a dinner on the eve of his death. "That will give new hope to pensioners, new hope to young people, new hope to the low paid and

families, new hope for industry. New hope for the whole of the British people. We've had enough lies, enough sleaze, enough excuses. Enough is enough. We are united and ready to govern. This was the week when old and new came together — a Labour Party united, a Britain united. A new Labour government."

In a series of glibes at the Tories he called the Prime Minister "Gallop Major" — running scared of Labour, running scared of his own MPs and running scared of an election. "There was more bad news for Mr Major, he said. "They're closing his favourite eating place — the Happy Eater. He's so depressed. The Happy Eater was the only place to take his order."

Turning to the latest allegations of Tory party sleaze, Mr Prescott deftly avoided any mention of Baroness Turner of Camden, who was sacked from the Labour front bench on Thursday because of her connections with the lobbying firm Ian Greer Associates. He called for the former Tory minister Neil Hamilton's immediate resignation as an MP but said that Mr Major could not afford to lose him as he



John Prescott: "Ask yourself each day, 'can I do more to secure a Labour victory?'"

was the party's "immoral majority of one".

He went on: "I'd like to ask John Major this: what morality is there... In one man making £34 million out of rail privatisation, when so many of our people live in poverty? Where's the morality in people being bussed from one hospital to another, begging to be admitted? Where's the morality in record crime? In record unemployment? Record bankruptcies? Record poverty? All the product of deliberate government policy. That's what I call immoral."

There was an alternative, he urged party members to vote for the draft manifesto, which he said it would make a

Leaders seek to give members a greater say

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Labour leadership wants to modernise the annual conference to give party members more say in the policymaking process.

Yesterday Tom Sawyer, the general secretary, mocked the present arrangements and told delegates that there were "scores of ways" in which the conference could be improved. "I don't believe that hundreds of people out there helpfully waving their hands in the air at the possible but remote opportunity of having three minutes at this rostrum really does add up to a democratic, conference-making process," he said.

But he was forced to return to the hall later to dispel some activists' fears that the leadership would impose changes on the party. "The only way that the role of conference can be altered is by conference debating and making the decision to change that role."

Senior figures are investigating ways of enabling all party members to have greater influence on their delegates. There is also a proposal to shorten the conference, which at five days is seen by some as too long.

A review of the party structure, including the role of the conference and the National Executive Committee, is expected to be completed early next year. But the party says

that there will be no changes to next year's conference.

At the heart of the review is a proposal to give all constituency parties and union leaderships prior access to policy motions that will be debated. At present, complicated policy motions are drawn up only on the eve of the conference, leaving decision-making to the 1,250 delegates, who are unable to consult fellow activists on the final motion.

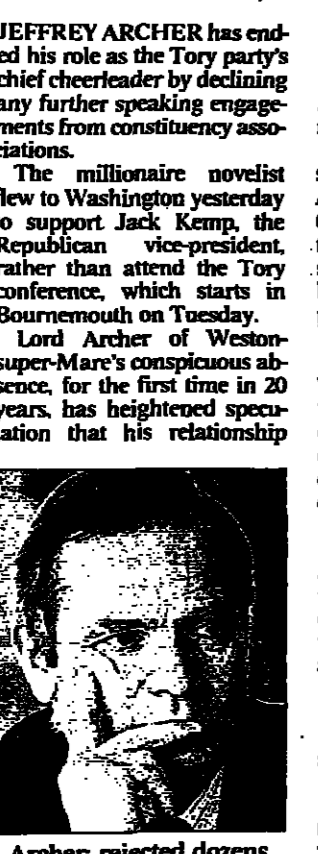
The leadership says that the increasing membership, now approaching 400,000, should be consulted more frequently. It cites the party-wide ballot over the rewording of Clause Four of the party's constitution and the forthcoming vote on the draft manifesto as examples of members having more influence.

However, some long-standing party members suggest that plans to increase the influence of constituency members, many of whom have joined since Tony Blair became leader, are designed to weaken the grip over the conference of union delegates and "old Labour" activists.

Senior figures agree that drawing up policy motions well in advance will help to avoid the usual eve-of-conference conflict. Mr Sawyer emphasised the need to avoid disputes between the party and a Labour government.

Archer's flight leaves Tories disappointed

By ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT



Archer: rejected dozens of speaking requests

JEFFREY ARCHER has ended his role as the Tory party's chief cheerleader by declining any further speaking engagements from constituency associations.

The millionaire novelist flew to Washington yesterday to support Jack Kemp, the Republican vice-president, rather than attend the Tory conference, which starts in Bournemouth on Tuesday.

Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare's conspicuous absence, for the first time in 20 years, has heightened speculation that his relationship

given a ministerial job in the last reshuffle, spoke last year to 141 associations, travelling more than 24,000 miles and raising £1.4 million.

His pulling power at constituency events is legendary. At his last engagement, for Gillian Shepherd, the Education Secretary, the room was so crowded that some guests brought their own tables, plates and cutlery.

A chairman of one West Midlands association said: "It's standing room only when Jeffrey comes. He charms people to death, delivers a good speech and we can even get autographed copies of his book. He is marvellous for fundraising."

Now all speaking requests are being turned away with a polite but unequivocal letter of regret from Lord Archer, whose staff say he is "not available". Central Office has received many complaints.

But yesterday Lord Archer insisted that he had not deserted the Tories. "I remain a 100 per cent supporter of the Prime Minister and the party," he said. "I remain convinced we can still win the next election."

However, when asked if he had plans to address any Conservative associations, he said: "No comment."

Next week his traditional role of cheering up the activists with a fundraising appeal before the Prime Minister's speech will be performed by the former party chairman Lord Parkinson.

Lord Archer's absence will also deprive the conference of its social highlight, his fabled "Krug and Shepherd's Pie parties", which usually attract a full turnout from the Cabinet. He always restricted invitations to "political editors, editors and ministers of Cabinet status", and enjoyed turning away junior ministers.



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See Weekend - Travel - Page 18

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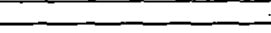
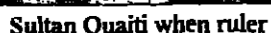
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THINK The Link

BY MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR



The Sultan, closely related to the Nizam of Hyderabad, is an intellectual who speaks half-a-dozen languages and understands Tuareg. Described by friends as a serious, devout Muslim proud of his ancestry, he is a connoisseur of Muslim art, boasts an

The Sultan returned to Yemen last month, where he was received with ceremony by the Government in Sanaa and members of the Yemeni Socialist Party politburo. He then flew home to Mukalla, the capital of Hadramaut, to an ecstatic reception. A caval-

united in 1992, and the Sanaa Government, after the discovery of extensive oil and gas reserves, now needs the expertise of bankers and businessmen to cope with the expected energy boom. It has promised to discuss restoring the Sultan's property.

Kristina with her parents, Richard and Shanna Jacobson, after her ordeal ended with her kidnapper's death

Richard and Shanna Jacobson.

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

36, also known as the Night Stalker, in 1988. Relatives of her fiancé's victims have condemned San Quentin prison for allowing Ramirez to marry, while Ms Lioy's family boycotted the wedding. Prison officials said the couple will not be allowed to consummate the marriage.

Win your rent for a year

Blackwell's Bookshops, in association with Penguin Books and *The Times*, offers you the chance to win a cheque for £2,000 towards your rent — and there are three cheques to be won. Simply collect three of the six tokens which have appeared this week. Attach them to the prize draw entry form (published last Monday) and send it with your name, address, course and institution to: Win Your Rent Prize Draw, PO Box 8381, London SE7 7ZF. You must be a full-time student. Closing date: November 1, 1996.

CHANGING TIMES

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THE TIMES

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dec. Please bear in mind that the future of the Investments Office is under consideration in London EC2N Investment Authority.

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THE HIDDEN ASSETS OF RMC GROUP
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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

SATURDAY OCTOBER 5 1996

Reed considers Bloomberg takeover

By ERIC REGULY

REED ELSEVIER has evaluated Bloomberg Business News as a possible acquisition and has consulted advisers about buying into the American financial information group. The Anglo-Dutch publishing group has stated that it hopes to make a multibillion-dollar acquisition in America. Bloomberg is estimated to be worth \$3 billion and would catapult Reed into the forefront of the real-time financial information industry.

Reed would not comment about Bloomberg and no deal is thought to be imminent. City sources, however, said

that Nigel Stapleton, co-chairman of Reed, might welcome the opportunity to open negotiations with Michael Bloomberg, the flamboyant former Salomon Brothers trader who founded Bloomberg in the early 1980s and owns 70 per cent of the company. Merrill Lynch, the Wall Street securities house, owns the rest.

Bloomberg and Reed are no strangers to each other. In April, Reed announced that the Bloomberg daily market surveys would be available on Reed's Nedis-Lexis on-line information service. Bloomberg and Reed said that they have "formed a long-term partnership in which they will explore

ways to leverage the complementary strengths of both companies".

Bloomberg is the fastest growing competitor to Reuters. It made its name by developing a user-friendly analytical tool for bond traders and its terminals have since become more sophisticated. Mr Bloomberg's empire now includes a news service, magazines, newsletters and radio stations.

Bloomberg has about 53,000 terminals in use compared with the 340,000 at Reuters. Financial information about the company is scant because it is private. Bloomberg had estimated operating cashflow of \$260 million last year. Turnover was about \$650 mil-

lion, up from \$520 million in 1994. Based on the £12.7 billion market value of Reuters, equivalent to almost five times last year's turnover, analysts said that Bloomberg could be worth \$3 billion.

An acquisition of that size is well within Reed's reach. The company, jointly owned by Reed International of the UK and Elsevier of The Netherlands, has built up a cash pile from the sale of its consumer businesses.

It is not known whether Mr Bloomberg is willing to sell his controlling stake in Bloomberg, or take in an equity partner.

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NU acts to halt policy 'scam'

By MARIANNE CURPHEY

NORWICH UNION has launched a top-level investigation into allegations that financial advisers are encouraging "carpetbaggers" to make fraudulent backdated applications for new policies. The suspected scam follows NU's announcement that it intends to float on the stock market and pay each policyholder a dividend of around £500 in free shares.

The inquiry will look into claims that at least one financial adviser, working in the South East, has been encouraging clients to apply for new policies and fraudulently backdating applications to before midnight on October 1, when membership was frozen.

NU said yesterday: "We take this extremely seriously. In the first instance we will report anyone we find behaving in this way to the Personal Investment Authority. To go to the police we would need to prove that there had been criminal intent." It went on: "If an IFA who normally sends us one or two forms a week suddenly submits 25, we will investigate. Most IFAs are honest... but there is always one bad apple. We will interview customers and look at whether cheques have been written out of sequence."

The problem has arisen because NU has promised to be flexible over the October 1 deadline, and has told advisers that it will accept "pipeline cases" — applications that had been completed but not processed — up to close of business yesterday.

James Duffell, NU spokesman, said: "We are determined that innocent qualifying members will not lose out... We do not want their entitlement diluted."

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WEEKEND MONEY GUIDES



Guide 2 Where to put a windfall

US jobs data help equities to record

By JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

LONDON shares bounded into record territory above the 4,000 level again after surprisingly weak American employment figures which allayed fears of higher US interest rates.

The FT-SE 100 index jumped 24.4 points to close at a record 4,024.4. German shares in Frankfurt also hit a new high as American stocks and bonds surged after the jobs report which provided unexpected but clear vindication of the US Federal Reserve's recent decision not to raise interest rates.

The US unemployment rate increased to 5.2 per cent in September from 5.1 per cent in August and the number of jobs in the economy fell for the first time since January — a month when the economy had been abnormally depressed by winter blizzards and government shutdowns during an impasse on the American budget.

September saw non-farm payrolls decrease by a seasonally adjusted 40,000 after a healthy rise of 241,000 in August. Wall Street economists had expected 166,000 jobs to have been created

outside the agricultural sector. The number in manufacturing employment fell 57,000 in September having risen by 18,000 in August, a clear sign that American industry is losing some steam.

The Dow Jones industrial average jumped 50 points to a new trading high of 5,983.17 after the figures before settling back to stand about 32 points higher in early afternoon trading.

The Treasury bond market surged ahead with the benchmark 30-year bond up more than a full point at midday, allowing its yield to drop to 6.74 per cent. The euphoria in the US bond market split over into Europe where British government bonds posted gains of nearly a full point.

The positive implications for the US economy of what appears to be a spontaneous slowdown in growth, without the added depressive of higher interest rates, were not lost on Robert Reich, US Labor Secretary. He said that there was growing evidence that the economy had slowed down to a more sustainable pace from the 4.8 per cent growth seen in the second quarter.

He said he saw no sign of wages pushing up inflation and said that it was possible that unemployment could fall even further than the 5.1 per cent level recorded in August. Joseph Stiglitz, chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, said that the jobs report was "consistent with our view that the economy is continuing on its path of steady, sustained expansion".

On September 24, the Federal Open Market Committee opted to keep US interest rates unchanged, although many financial market participants had expected a small rise in the Fed funds rate to help to slow the economy down and prevent any flare up of inflationary pressures.

Economists at HSBC James Capel said: "The Fed recognised the weakness in the real economy that has developed in the third quarter by leaving rates unchanged in September. This report vindicates that decision."

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Suburban safari: Professor David Bellamy, vice-president of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, leads a school visit to Well Wood near Bromley in Kent, to mark a joint venture with Nynex, the cable company, to encourage conservation

Eurotunnel shows banks its progress

By JONATHAN PRYNN
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

EUROTUNNEL yesterday sent its banks a timely reminder of its rapidly improving operating performance as its 26 main lenders met in London to consider its £4 billion refinancing plan.

Channel Tunnel traffic figures for September showed that the total of tourist vehicles carried on Le Shuttle trains more than doubled to 224,759, from 108,947 in September of last year.

At a four-hour meeting, refinancing terms were put to the 26 "lending banks" for consideration later. All 22 banks on the syndicate and two thirds of shareholders must ratify them. Details are expected on Monday.

IEA says benefit of EU is marginal

By OUR ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

THE economic effects on Britain if it chose to leave the European Union would be marginal, according to a new study published by the Institute of Economic Affairs.

Better Off Out? The Benefits or Costs of EU Membership by Brian Hindley and Martin Howe concludes that the gain or loss of withdrawal would probably be less than 1 per cent of GDP.

The authors conclude from this that a British government, faced with unacceptable political developments, should not be deterred from changing Britain's relationship with the EU, or even leaving as a last resort, because it fears adverse economic consequences.

Mr Howe said yesterday:

"Our clear conclusion is that even the worst case (pulling out of the EU) wouldn't be economically disastrous... If politics should compel the country to go along that line, we shouldn't hold back because of economics."

The European Movement — which boasts Edwina Currie and Peter Mandelson among its vice-chairmen — said the economic and political benefits of Britain's EU membership were both real and substantial. It particularly pointed out the benefits of access to the single market.

The IEA report acknowledged that Britain could lose out in this respect if the EU were to erect trade barriers on its departure.

Telekom sell-off prospectus issued

By ERIC REGULY

THE sale of Deutsche Telekom, the German Government's flagship privatisation and the largest European public offering of 1996, got under way in earnest yesterday with the publication of the issue's prospectus.

The German Government said it will sell 500 million Deutsche Telekom shares, about 20 per cent of the phone company's enlarged equity capital, to raise about DM15 billion. The shares' price range is to be announced on October 22 and the final price set by November 17. They are

to start trading on the Frankfurt and New York stock exchanges on November 18, and in Tokyo a day later.

If the sale flops, Bonn's privatisation programme — from the railways to the post office — could be put in jeopardy. The challenge is to convince individual German investors, who have little experience in buying equities, to take the risk.

About 50 per cent of the issue is expected to be sold in Germany. Analysts said that North American and British investors could soak up most of the 50 per cent foreign tranche. However, foreigners will not be eligible for share discounts

unless they have German bank accounts. Analysts think the shares will be priced at the middle or upper end of the expected DM20 to DM30 range. Joachim Kröske, Deutsche Telekom's finance director, said that the company will pay DM1.5 billion in dividends this year, rising to DM3 billion next year. This would give the shares a gross yield of about 5.7 per cent, against a yield of only about 2.1 per cent for the German stock market as a whole.

Deutsche Telekom expects profits from ordinary activities of DM6 billion next year, on turnover of DM60 billion, against DM4 billion this year.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDEXES

FTSE 100	4024.4	(+24.4)
FTSE All share	1975.27	(+9.52)
Nikkei	21148.03	(+183.47)
New York	5988.02	(+33.17)
Dow Jones	5988.02	(+33.17)
S&P Composite	598.60	(+8.82)

US RATE

Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Long Bond	100%	(89%)
Yield	6.74%	(6.84%)

LONDON MONEY

3-month Interbank	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Life long gilt future (Dec)	110 1/2%	(109 1/2%)

STERLING

New York	1.5630*	(1.5658)
London	1.5631	(1.5661)
DM	2.2608	(2.2671)
FF	2.2645	(2.2658)
Sfr	1.9628	(1.9647)
Yen	174.38	(174.57)
S Index	87.1	(87.2)

DOLLAR

London	1.5300*	(1.5302)
DM	5.1795*	(5.1828)
FF	1.2563*	(1.2558)
Sfr	1.1181*	(1.1148)
Yen	97.5	(97.6)

TOKYO

Tokyo close	Yen 111.53
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NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Dec)	\$23.20	(\$23.20)
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GOLD

London close	\$380.45	(\$379.85)
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* denotes midday trading price

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□ **Allan Bridgewater** is Group Chief Executive of Norwich Union and a former chairman of the Association of British Insurers.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Lang likely to delay decision on airlines

Major

Roof garden

Foreca

The New

gild

A WORKING WEEK FOR: HOWARD DAVIES

Major-domo at home at Bank of England

Jon Ashworth meets the man at the centre of debates that touch the nation's pockets, and sees a surprise in his elegant old desk

Monday
Tuesday
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Friday

IT IS EASY to get lost in the Bank of England. The route to the Deputy Governor's office starts in a grandiose reception area, peopled by footmen in pink waistcoats and top hats, and winds through a labyrinth of passages, the connecting doors so heavy that they could be lined with gold from the vaults below. More doors, more passages, then there it is, the central chamber, and a lurking Minoaur, in the crisp-shirted form of Howard Davies.

Bank's management committee, Davies is responsible for staffing, property issues, pay negotiations, and so on. He also takes the lead in banking supervision — an issue to the fore since the fall of Barings.

Constantly shuffling personnel is one of the more tiresome aspects of the job. "It's like one of those plastic games where you keep on trying to make the pattern, and never quite achieve it," Davies says. "That is quite wearing, but I think every chief executive would recognise that — the conflicting demands of different areas."

A short passage links the rooms of Governor and Deputy Governor, and I am allowed a quick look at Eddie George's parlour — cavernous, steeped in old world charm and opening on to a garden, where he can stroll in peace.

The splendour belies a practical approach to running the nation's finances. The Bank has funny habits — rooms are called parlours, concierges are footmen — but discussions are the same as in any business. Davies says: "The style of the place is different, in terms of its outward manifestations. It's men in pink coats, and marble halls, and that sort of thing, and that's what people expect, and why they disappoint them — as long as it doesn't mean your internal working practices become excessively formal."

"Fortunately, for the most part, I don't think that's the case. It might be slightly odd that when you come to a meeting to discuss monetary policy there is a man with a pink coat who's making sure that everybody's there, and tea and coffee come in silver things, but once that's done, you have as lively an argument about interest rates, and with people

telling each other what they think of them, and their views, in a way that you would anywhere else. It doesn't, in my view, carry over into a great formality of interpersonal relationships within the Bank."

The Deputy Governor's week varies greatly, depending on the stage in the Bank's monthly cycle. The ten days leading up to a monthly monetary meeting start with the review committee, chaired by Davies, which considers issues such as housing demand, retail sales and money supply. The meeting lasts half a day, and involves about 40 people. It ends with a debate on whether interest rates should move — which suddenly brings the Bank very close to your pocket.

Davies makes it sound easy. "One of the nice things about this process is that, although the arguments are complicated, the ultimate decision's quite simple," he says. "There are only three things you can do with interest rates, really — put 'em up, put 'em down, or keep them the same." The consensus is outlined in a draft letter, dispatched to the Treasury for further



Howard Davies, Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, controls an organisation employing 3,700 and "promoting British financial institutions overseas"

debate. Finally, Governor and Deputy Governor and the Chancellor and Treasury officials decide a course of action.

Davies spends much of his time on financial regulation, and on articulating the Bank's messages to the outside world. The debate about European monetary union (EMU) is to the fore. "I do quite a lot of speaking, particularly at the moment focused on EMU, not trying to make the decision, but trying to explain to people what is going on in other countries, and how the transition works," Davies says.

He spent last weekend at a conference in Italy, and was engrossed in internal meetings for much of Monday and Tuesday. Wearing his ceremonial hat, he welcomed a delegation from Shanghai, which recently signed an accord with London, aimed at increasing co-operation between the two cities. "I think with our broad role in the City we feel that we have an interest in promoting British financial institutions overseas," he says.

The end of the week found Davies in

Liverpool, addressing students about banking supervision, and talking about monetary union to the Liverpool Cotton Association. He visited the Bank's local agent — one of several outposts throughout the UK — and met trade unions. On Friday night, he took a taxi from Liverpool to Rochdale — "to stay with my mum". He had hoped to see Manchester City play West Bromwich, but the match has been postponed, and he will cut his mother's hedge instead.

Davies was not around for the Bank's biggest test of recent years — the collapse of Barings — but has had his share of excitement. This week's manoeuvring at Eurotunnel was raised at the Bank's morning meeting, known as "Books". Officials gather at 8.45, assessing developments in foreign markets, the exchanges, and the money and domestic

capital markets. "We do that for about ten minutes," says Davies, "then we laugh at what's in the press. And then we share other running stories."

Two weeks ago, the running story was Morgan Grenfell. Davies says: "The Bank needs to watch very carefully, either individual market cases, or market moves, because of our interest in financial stability." Eurotunnel, while nothing like Barings, which threatened systemic collapse, was nevertheless watched with care. "There was a reputational issue, clearly, in terms of the London market, and it knocks on into private finance," Davies says. "There are big issues raised by Eurotunnel, but I don't think that they are to do with bank failure."

Speeches are an important part of the job, and Davies picks his speaking engagements with care. "If there's an audience out there that actually wants a proper exposition from the Bank of England in a light, but hopefully correct, way, on what we think we're trying to do

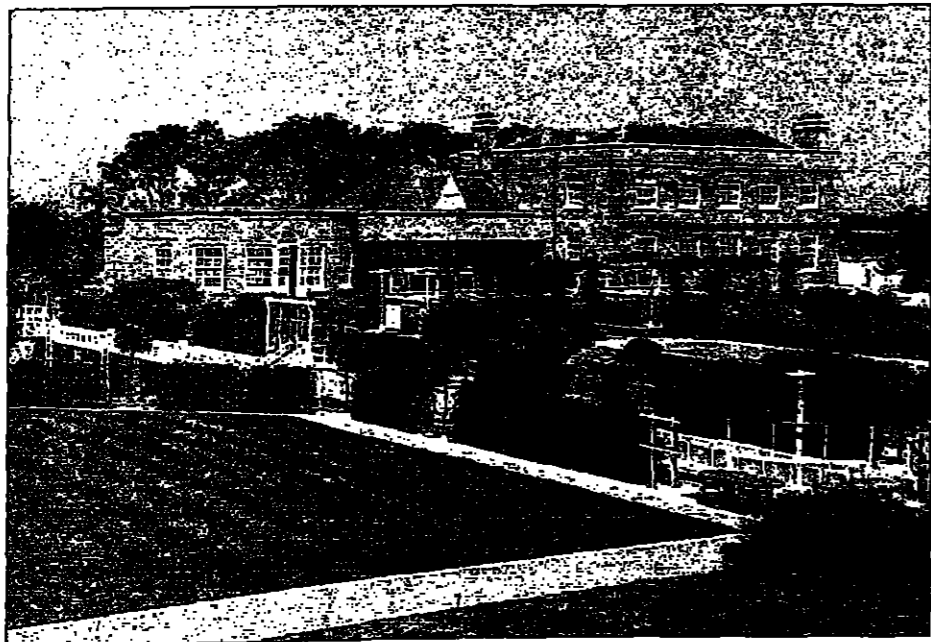
on banking supervision, or what's going on on EMU, or how we see the shape of the economy, then I quite enjoy doing that, and I quite enjoy the question and answer process," he says. "What I do not enjoy are the events where people think that they want to have the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England because that gives some status to the event."

He adds: "We want to convince people that the Bank actually does pay attention to what's going on in the real economy, as opposed to the financial economy. We're sensitive to criticism that we're too focused on financial indicators only."

The secret, Davies says, is not to be seduced by the Old Lady's grandeur. "In a way, the desk is a sort of symbol of that," he says, gesturing to his desk, by the window. "It is an old elegant partner's desk. Built into it is a rather sophisticated set of screens with e-mail and everything else. That, in a sense, is a metaphor for the style the Bank. I think, likes to adopt, and I'm quite comfortable with that."

HIDDEN ASSETS

Roof garden the crowning glory of new headquarters



Viewed from a mile away RMC House has been landscaped into virtual invisibility

It takes a certain amount of cunning, and perhaps gall, to succeed in commissioning the building of a distinctly Modernist corporate headquarters providing 3,500 square metres of new office accommodation, training facilities and more, on a site surrounded by listed buildings that is both in the heart of the metropolitan green belt and overlooked by one of Surrey's cherished viewpoints, St Ann's Hill, just south of the M3-M25 intersection. But this is what the RMC Group has done with great aplomb.

The group's new headquarters has been cleverly integrated into its surroundings. The new buildings are concealed within the lines of the landscape and disguised with gardens. The listed buildings have been restored and adapted with sympathy to meet the modern-day needs of a multinational company's headquarters.

The result, known as RMC House, has won more design and architectural awards, more landscaping prizes and general green acclaim than one

Joanna Pitman discovers why the beautifully disguised RMC House has won a host of awards

might believe possible. The reason it has pulled in such an impressive haul of prizes is largely because when Surrey's Hill to stand at the top and sweep the horizon, they can barely tell it's there.

Viewed from a mile away, RMC House has been landscaped into virtual invisibility. Yet Edward Cullinan Architects, working closely with Derek Lovejoy Partnership, the landscape architects, have managed to come up with a scheme that both retains the historic elements and also provides new offices, conference rooms and training facilities, including 26 study bedrooms, a laboratory and recreation areas for resident staff and training course delegates.

To return the whole site to its original landscaped appearance without the garden boundaries, hedged off garden areas have been planted over

the 4,500 sq ft roof of the new buildings.

This must be one of the largest roof gardens in Britain. It has lawns, shrub borders, paths, pergolas (and handrails around the entire perimeter, concealed in yew hedges) and computer-controlled irrigation and drainage systems.

And if the roof garden is not enough, staff and training residents can make use of the indoor swimming pool, gymnasium, squash and tennis courts, sauna and snooker room. Given that RMC Group specialises in supplying materials to the building industry it was able to provide many of the products and services required in building its own new headquarters.

The group has an extensive range and an extensive sales reach, employing more than 27,000 internationally, in operations throughout Europe, the

United States and Israel. Worldwide sales in 1995 were £4.5 billion, derived largely from the production of ready mixed concrete, sand, gravel, quarried materials, lime, mortar, rolled asphalt and macadam and pre-cast concrete products, such as "wave-walkers", those lunar module-shaped concrete blocks fixed on beaches to minimise coastal erosion.

Founded in 1930 with its first ready mixed concrete plant in Bedford, Middlesex, the firm quickly expanded through acquisition into continental Europe. Today it owns or has a controlling share in 41 subsidiary and associated companies across Europe, the US and Israel. In 1979 RMC Group diversified into leisure and now owns and operates the Thorpe Park leisure complex in Surrey as well as Leisure Sport Angling.

Glamour has never been readily associated with the building materials business, but the new RMC House serves as an impressive showcase for the group's products, and with it the company's glamorous ratings have certainly improved.

Forecast for London. Showers.

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CRACKED STEEL 32

Bumpy road ahead for British Steel

WEEKEND MONEY

FREE WARRANTS 33

Can they really be such a bargain?



Policyholders must wait for NU to spring into action

Norwich Union policyholders may have to wait up to seven months to discover exactly how many free shares will be allocated when the society floats on the stock market.

The three million qualifying policyholders will be sent more information about NU's proposed demutualisation in the spring, after which they will be asked to vote on the flotation plans at an extraordinary general meeting on a date yet to be arranged.

Soon afterwards they will be told more about the size of their windfall payout, although the price of the shares they will acquire will depend on market conditions at the time.

Though the average payout is expected to be around £500, investors who have been with the mutual for many years can expect more generous returns than those who, for example, took out a policy with

NU ten days ago. "There are two methods of reimbursing policyholders for their loss of membership rights," NU said. "There is a set allocation for all qualifying members, plus an extra allocation for people who have been with the society for a long time. There is no maximum payout."

An estimated 100,000-plus people have called the NU helpline since it opened on Wednesday morning. Many of these are long-standing NU customers who are concerned that "carpetbaggers", who joined the society days before it announced flotation plans, may be more handsomely rewarded than themselves.

NU acted swiftly to freeze membership, and any policies taken out after midnight on October 1 will not qualify for shares. Around 15,000 people whose pensions, endowments, term assurance or other savings plans mature before the

E.G.M. or who die before then, will be paid an average 3 per cent cash bonus, which will be added to their policy's value. This would add an extra £400 to a policy worth £12,000.

Richard Harvey, group finance director, said NU decided to distribute free shares, rather than cash to avoid falling foul of Inland Revenue regulations.

"We considered paying cash, but decided on shares because the Revenue might regard cash as a part payout during the life of the policy, and this carries penalties."

Qualifying members are those who have one or more of the following policies in force on October 2 and at the time of the E.G.M.: life insurance, including non-

profit; individual pension; annuity and company pension schemes. However, there will be no payouts for people who buy second-hand endowment policies.

About two million of NU's customers will not qualify as members. These include motor, house-

hold and other general insurance policyholders; health or medical insurance policyholders; PHI and income protection or unit trusts and personal equity plans.

NU will not give guarantees to policyholders on plan charges once it becomes a quoted company. This is in stark contrast to the management of Clerical Medical, which pledged not to increase charges for five years by more than the retail price index.

Mr Harvey said: "We do not feel the need to make such statements. There is no expectation at NU that policies with variable charges will see the charges rise."

The mutual is being restructured and the life fund, which currently owns NU and its subsidiaries, will be separated off from the general insurance business.

Allan Bridgewater, NU's chief executive, says this means the life fund will no longer be subject to the vagaries of the insurance market. In compensation for losing any profits from general insurance in the future, an unspecified amount of money is being paid back into the life fund.

But should investors accept the compensation payments and vote for the flotation, or would they be better off voting for NU to remain a mutual? Now that the NU has declared its

intention to float, it would be very vulnerable if it was forced to remain a mutual, and would most likely become a takeover target. Even if it does float, there are plenty of players in the market, including pensions giants like the Prudential, which could afford to buy it.

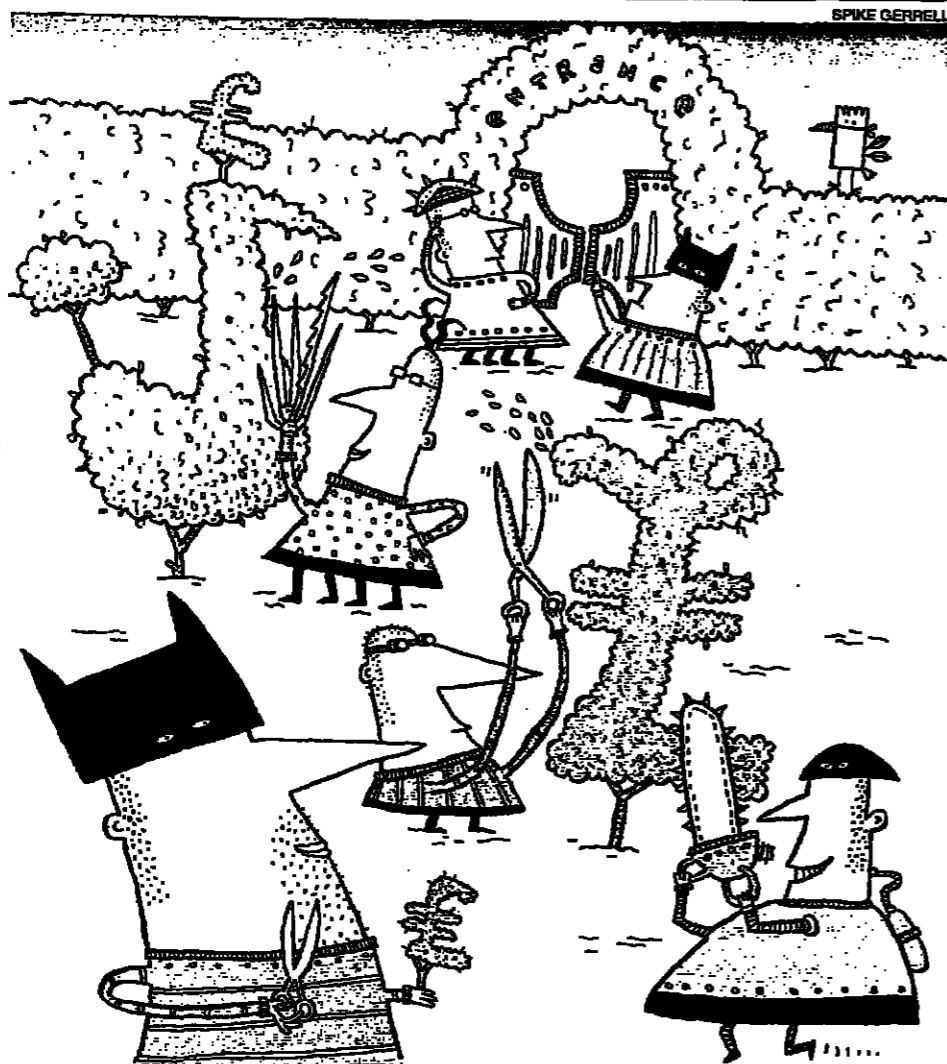
Historically, it has been difficult for policyholders to block such proposals. One actuary believes that current policyholders will not be greatly affected by demutualisation but believes that the NU will, in future, be trying to meet the demands of shareholders and may offer products which are less competitive.

He said: "NU rates and charges have been competitive in the past. Recent surveys have shown mutuals often offer better terms than publicly owned companies."

MARIANNE CURPHEY

Hedging your bets is a risky business

The long and short of it is that the days of easy money are over, says Adam Jones



Larger hedge funds find it harder to cut and run, but the current climate may be tempting

They were the City equivalent of Stealth bombers: cunning fund managers with an eye for the fault lines in world financial markets, slipping multimillion-pound bets into place before anyone knew what was happening.

With George Soros as their squadron leader, the leading hedge fund gurus were capable of making a £1 billion profit for their investors on an exceptional day. Their pay packets continue to reflect this. Last week Spencer Nicholas Roditi, a British adviser to Soros, was reported to earn £50 million a year.

But the days of easy money are over. The biggest hedge funds control so much money that the markets can see them coming; more than £50 billion of money is unlikely to be wept. The large sums required to play — often hundreds of thousands of pounds, even millions — make the likes of Soros's Quantum Fund an improbable choice. The huge volatility is another deterrent.

But the principle on which hedge funds are based can give food for thought in the current financial climate. For the uninitiated, hedge funds are a huge pool of institutional and private capital. They differ from unit and investment trusts in a fundamental way. These more conventional investment vehicles are typically limited to a certain market — smaller companies, emerging markets. More importantly, they work on the assumption that the value of the shares they buy will rise. In City parlance, they are "long-only".

But betting on a rise is only one way of taking a risk. Big profits can also be made predicting a fall. The practice of agreeing to sell an investment — shares, bonds, currencies — at a fixed price in the

future is called "selling short" (you don't actually own the thing when you agree to sell it). The idea is that the market price will drop beneath the agreed sale price, creating profit.

In hedge funds, the risk in "going long" on stocks can be balanced by selling short. What's more, hedge fund managers can also have freedom to move the money wherever the action is. They can also borrow to create gearing.

Hedge fund strategies vary a lot. They are not all like Soros's Quantum fund, betting on macroeconomic trends and events. Because of the variety of risks involved, they

are not authorised by the Securities and Investments Board. They are classed as offshore investments and are forbidden to advertise. Only authorised investment advisers — stockbrokers, independent financial advisers, etc — can recommend them.

Managers based in the UK that operate in this field include Odey Asset Management, Momentum and Global Asset Management (GAM). GAM manages £5.8 billion; its largest fund is GAM Diversify, at £450 million. In the past year, it would have turned £100 into £116, according to Microcap, the performance analysts. The minimum entry

sum is \$15,000 (£9,600). There are ways of incorporating hedge fund techniques into your portfolio without going offshore, through UK-licensed unit trusts designed to take advantage of falling markets.

Offered by John Govett and Mercury, the unit price of these "bear market" trusts rises when the index falls because they sell short, buying futures instead of shares. They are often a short-term option for an investor with a large portfolio who feels the market will drop. They jump in, hoping to earn

at least some money when the rest of their investments are falling, then dash back out when more optimistic.

Since the funds are designed to capitalise on short bursts of pessimism, past performance figures are somewhat misleading. Over the past year, both the Mercury and John Govett UK bear funds would have lost about £7 for every £100, because of the continuing bull run, according to Microcap.

It is not easy, therefore, to judge how well they perform in their natural habitat — a slump. But with the London market at record levels, more investors might be prepared to take the risk and hedge.

Weekend Money is edited by Anne Ashworth

Market mania will not last

THE FT-SE 100 index broke the psychologically important 4,000 level on Wednesday this week on the back of record highs on Wall Street (Richard Thomson and Caroline Merrell write).

The US market was encouraged by leaked remarks from Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, who indicated that he had no intention of increasing interest rates because there was no danger of inflation really taking off in the American economy.

The UK market is continuing to prosper in conditions of low interest rates and low inflation, but some analysts fear that there could be a fall in the price of shares in the UK market, while some believe that there will be a period of flatness. The movement of the market in the US will be crucial for the UK.

Last week the Dow Jones Industrial average pushed above 5,900, a rise of 150.9

per cent in the last six years without a 10 per cent fall. The previous record was held by the bull market that ended in 1987 after a rise of 150.6 per cent.

Most analysts expect the Dow to climb even higher. "It's plain sailing through the election in November," says David Schulman, Salomon Brothers' chief equity strategist. He is predicting 6,200 on the Dow in the foreseeable future, even though he believes shares are already somewhat overpriced.

But that is the fundamental worry nagging at the market. On most normal measures, US stocks are too high and should be close to a setback. Yet the kind of significant correction that would bring the market back to a safe level never seems to happen.

Michael Metz, an equity strategist at Oppenheimer, calls the current market level "financial mania", yet not even he is willing to predict when it will stop rising.

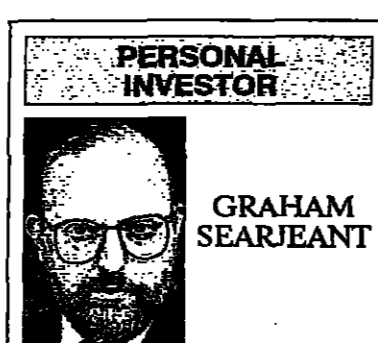
Records are to be broken

Share prices made headlines for the right reasons this week. The FT-SE 100 index reached a new record. In doing so, it surged through the "psychological" 4,000 mark. If only to retreat limply within 48 hours. Predictably, these events sparked in-depth analysis and the traditional ritual warnings. Shares might be overvalued and retribution, in the form of a mini-crash, or "correction", due shortly. That may be true, but should we really agonise over share price records?

In an ideal world where markets were perfect, where everyone knew everything there was to know and interest rates were low, the index should reach a new record almost daily. If actuaries had their way, the FT-SE 100 would rise between 1.6 and 1.8 points each working day, working tirelessly and relentlessly towards the annual rates of return assumed in pension fund valuations.

These actuarial assumptions, which drive fund management, project future share prices and dividend growth from the long-term real growth potential of the economy, pretending that inflation is neutral. These projections are then discounted back to the present. Rationally, round numbers such as 4,000 should mean little because most investors still trade individual shares, not indices.

The daily record should not be interrupted by such short-term trivia as interest rate adjustments, tantrums from the foreign exchanges, takeover bids, opinion polls, surprise profit reports or not monthly economic statistics that are not quite what forecasters expected. Only big shocks, such as Middle East wars,



GRAHAM SEARJEANT

that have some lasting effect on dividend growth rates should mar the serene progress of the index.

As any investor soon learns, the real world bears no likeness to this model. Reactions are instant and based on ignorance. Vision is limited and the money cost of time relatively high. Even in a liquid market, only a tiny proportion of stock is traded each day, at prices related to a spectrum of financial assets rather than fundamental value. News that prompts one investor to buy or sell usually provokes the same reaction in others, so prices move sharply to persuade enough to take the opposite view to balance supply and demand.

The trickiest aspect of market movements is momentum, because it often masks underlying trends. The City calls it sentiment. To the rest of us, it is a herd instinct to follow the crowd. In practice, almost all trends run too far and too fast. When momentum runs out and prices retreat towards a more rational level,

the herd is just as likely to charge too far in the opposite direction. Analysts of share price charts try to predict changes in short-term trends by measuring changes in momentum.

A herd often pauses when it comes to a barrier, such as a round number on the stock market index. It took professionals a while in 1991 to gather enough courage to push the FT-SE 100 up through 2,500. In practice, over the past decade, these round numbers have counted for more on the way down. Once prices are established above a landmark level, that tends to act as floor to downtrends in prices, as in 1990 or 1994.

Some chartists reckon sentiment is neutral in the UK at the moment, though shares have risen vertically since July. There are other reasons why 4,000 ought not to be too significant. Movements in top shares are unusually varied. Many, including Allied Domecq, BAT, British Gas, Guinness and National Grid are, for one reason or another, nearer the year's low than any record high, so investors do not feel they are in the middle of a heady boom. On a long-term view, too, nothing untoward is happening. Prices were reckoned a little topy at the start of the year. To reach 4,000, however, the index needed to rise little more than 300 points or 8.5 per cent, comfortably within those actuarial projections.

In this irrational world, the main worry is that shares have run too far ahead on Wall Street. The herd may be turning there. If it does, London would soon be coughing in the dust storm.

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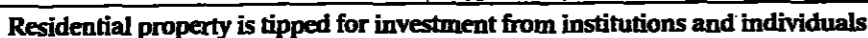
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Door opens for landlords



Buying to let is traditionally seen as a form of investment favoured most by expatriates or investors with big portfolios. The new scheme aims to

London, rental yields are terrific," she says. "If you buy a property for £100,000, and pay £25,000 cash, and take out a mortgage for the balance, the rent will pay the mortgage. And if the property realises a 5

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CAROLINE MERRELL

"I was surprised at the number of building societies who just would not entertain the idea. But since the launch of Buy-to-Let, I have seriously started looking for somewhere to buy, and the Woolwich have just sent me details of the scheme. I would like to buy somewhere down South, and have arranged a couple of places to have a look at in the Surrey area," he says.

Extracts from Investment Intelligence – Weighted Performance Rankings of ALL unit trust management groups as at 1.9.96

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How hard does your company pension work?

All company pensions are not alike. A report published this week by Union Pension Services, a pension specialist, uncovered huge differences between the benefits provided by 200 major company final salary-type pension schemes. Final salary schemes, which have their origins in Victorian public sector pension funds, provide pensions linked to earnings.

The 200 schemes were compared to a hypothetical scheme constructed by UPS. Only a fraction made the grade. Bryn Davies, an actuary with Union Pension Services, said: "We did not make the target pension a perfect scheme. We just tried to make it what we feel to be fair."

UPS took into account a number of criteria. When comparing final salary schemes it is important to look at how the benefits accrue. Each year of service will buy a proportion of pension equal to a fraction of the final salary.

For instance, under many schemes one year of employment will buy a pension equivalent to 1/60 of the final salary. Hence, 40 years of service will provide the maximum pension allowable under present Inland Revenue rules — two thirds of final salary.

Retirement age is another criterion. Some schemes allow members to retire early without any reduction in

Employees may not get the benefits they bargain for, says Caroline Merrell

benefits, while others will considerably reduce the pension.

One final aspect of company pension schemes which can be compared is the basis on which contributions and benefits are assessed. The pension should be linked to gross pay, including overtime. Differences will also occur in the levels of contributions made by employers and employees.

The target scheme against which all the other schemes were measured in the survey assumed automatic scheme membership with a minimum age of 18. The final pension is based on gross salary, and the retirement age is set at 60. Each year of service with this company will buy pensions benefits worth 1/60 of final salary.

The pension increases in line with the retail price index (RPI), and offers death in service benefit of four times the gross pension. Perhaps the most generous benefit offered by the model scheme is the spouse's pension — if the member dies, then the

spouse will receive two thirds of the pension, based on the size of pension before the tax-free lump sum has been taken out.

The survey compared the 200 schemes against this model, coming up with a percentage figure about how they performed.

Only 14 schemes had equivalent or better benefits than the model scheme. The best schemes were offered by BP, Woolwich, Reckitt & Colman, Whitbread, Hoover, Halifax, Granada and Nationwide.

Of the 200 schemes surveyed, 37 offered benefits which were at least 90 per cent equivalent to the model scheme. This group included those offered by Boots, ICI, Bradford & Bingley, Wimpey and Norwich Union.

Among the worst schemes were those offered by John Menzies, Forte, Rentokil, Rank Organisation and Express Newspapers.

For example, the John Menzies scheme was deemed to offer benefits that were only a third as good as the model scheme. Each year of service under the John Menzies scheme buys a pension which is only equivalent to 1/100 of final salary.

Union Pension Services can be contacted on 0171 737 0682. The full survey costs £295.

Spread the word

COMMENT



ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance Editor

Not so long ago no one talked about pensions for fear of being found dull. Now they are respectable, smart even, with some young men boasting of their turbocharged pension plans in the same way that they talk about new cars. However, the message that pensions are important has yet to be universally spread, and the emphasis in the debate remains too much on the state scheme.

Baroness Castle of Blackburn's attempt this week to urge the Labour Party to restore the link between the basic state pension and earnings was well-intentioned. But in highlighting the deficiencies of the state scheme, this pensioner militant diverted attention from the equally noteworthy shortcomings in other arrangements.

In the last few days, as we report on this page, a survey has appeared revealing that not all company pension schemes are equal.

Membership of a final salary scheme, where the benefits are less dependent on the vagaries of share prices, would seem to be the ideal solution to saving for retirement. But the survey shows that members of some such schemes would be foolish to believe that they could contemplate Rolls-Royce pensions. Although it's good to be with the Woolwich scheme, the yield from the Milk Marquee fund will apparently be less generous. Most fortunate of all are MPs, whose scheme we would all vote to be in.

Those elderly people now struggling to survive on the current basic state pension of £3,180 a year would wish that they had had the opportunity

the risks of investing in schemes — flesh, fowl or otherwise — where no watchdog keeps guard. Before signing a cheque, study our six-point guide (see page 32) to spotting an unsafe investment.

NU plays by the book

INSURANCE companies are not usually known for their finesse. Their relationships with their customers are characterised by indifference, punctuated by the odd bonus statement where the optimistic words contrast strangely with the depressing figures.

But Norwich Union appears to have been dipping into books of etiquette. The terms of the flotation seem intended to please as many people as possible. There will even be a payout for non-profit policyholders, who usually get left off the guest list for smart events.

Health, household and motor policyholders are not invited to the bonfire. They may be piqued but they should not be inconsolable. Life and pension policyholders may be about to receive free shares. But Norwich Union has not made any commitment to freeze its charges on these policies after its change of status.

This could mean that some of their windfall profit will be wiped away in higher deductions from premiums. Meanwhile, with the capital raised from the flotation, Norwich Union will be eagerly competing in the general insurance market, perhaps making car and contents cover cheaper. Who will be celebrating then?

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TOP 15

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Reckitt & Coleman	104%
Nationwide	104%
Hydro-Electric Scheme	104%
TSB	102%
Johnson Matthey	102%
Granada	102%
National Provincial	102%
Glynwed	101%
Whitbread	100%
Hoover	100%
Halifax	100%
General Accident	99%

BOTTOM 15

Rentokil	53%
BPC Plan	52%
United Glass	52%
Water Scheme	51%
BASF	42%
Forte	50%
Marshall	50%
Sea-Land	50%
WEIR Group	49%
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Source: Planned Savings surveys of regular contribution with-profits personal pension plans 1974-1996

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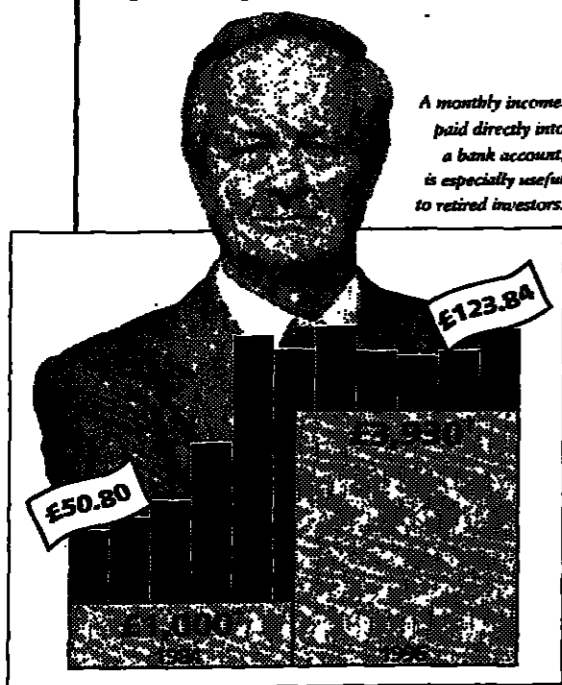
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* Source: companies' own literature.

** Source: Macropack UK Equity Income Index. Top quartile over 1, 5 & 10 years and since launch to 23/9/96 offer to bid, net income reinvested.

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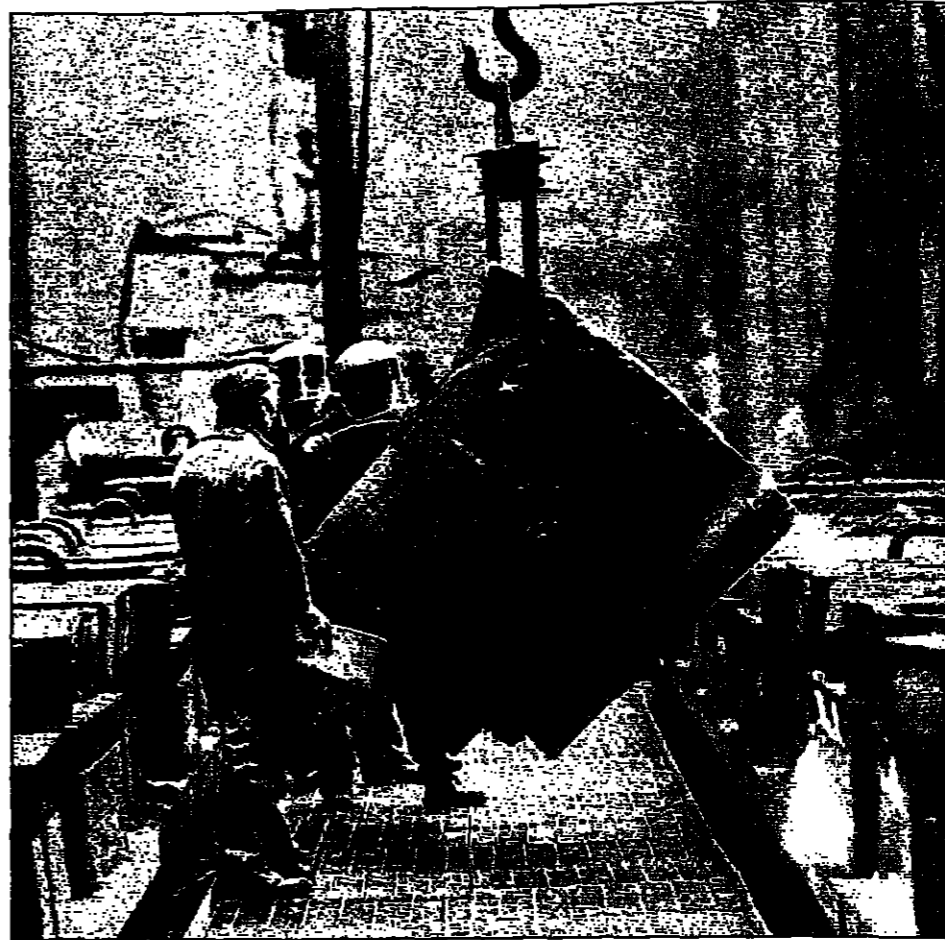
Steel yourself for bumpy road ahead



Most shareholders may have been ready to open the champagne to cheer a record week on the stock market, but British Steel shareholders will be feeling far from bubbly. A broker's decision to shift BS from "buy" to "hold" made the share the worst performer in the FT-SE 100 on Tuesday. Although they crept upwards for the rest of the week, the improvement did not reflect the record FT-SE gains.

Turbulence is nothing new for British Steel shareholders. From when the shares started trading in December 1988, until 1992, they convincingly underperformed the all-share index. Since then, there has been an improvement, but the general feeling is this high-yielding stock carries big risks.

The sector is so volatile that Alan Coats, analyst at Merrill Lynch, says: "Pensioners who invest in British Steel should also invest in heart pills."



Q How popular was the privatisation?

A By the time that British Steel was privatised in late 1988, the Government no longer had to convince punters that there was money to be made in buying shares. Earlier issues, such as the first stage of the British Telecom privatisation, had performed exceptionally well. As a result, the British Steel share offer was hugely oversubscribed.

Q How have the shares performed?

A Investors paid 125p a share for British Steel in 1988. By 1992, the shares had hit a low of 46.5p. Anyone who bought shares then will have done well. The share price has risen fairly consistently since, hitting a peak of 199.5p in April. Today, they trade at about 195p. Initial investors would have done better to have bought other shares, but British Steel investors still did better than those who left their money in the building society.

Q Why has the price been so erratic?

A Steel companies are erratic performers, at the mercy of demand from other industries and economic cycles. In addition, British Steel was badly in need of an overhaul when privatised and spent heavily to become more competitive. The last recession hit not long after privatisation, taking a bite out of the

Karen Zagor on ups and downs of the privatised British producer

company's profits and share price. Now, British Steel is a trimmer, more efficient version, with lower labour costs, allowing it to be a leading low-cost producer. This year, the shares firmed amid expectations that steel demand was set to pick up and rumours that the company was about to make a share buyback. The buyback speculation died down after the chairman said investing in new capacity was a higher priority.

Q What about its financial performance?

A After achieving record profits within two years of privatisation, the financial performance started to slump. By 1992, it was reporting pre-tax losses, which continued into 1993. The dividend, at 4.5p a share in 1992, fell to 1p a share in 1993. By 1994, earnings and dividends had started to recover, with pre-tax profits of £80 million and a dividend of 2p a share. By 1995, the dividend was 7.5p a share. More recently, the company reported 1996 pre-tax profits of £1.1 billion, with a 10p dividend.

Q What does the market expect?

A In spite of its recent record results, analysts

are cautious about the future. In June, when British Steel issued its annual results, it said that it was at the peak of its current cycle and that this year's earnings would be hurt by weak markets in Europe, although it still expected results to be satisfactory. British Steel may be in better shape now than it was going into the last recession, but there are still reasons to be concerned. Worries are widespread about steel prices in Europe, which have fallen sharply this year. About 80 per cent of British Steel's sales are in Europe, where oversupply is putting pressure on prices. Credit Lyonnais this week decided to lower its rating on the stock to reflect the poor pricing environment in recent months, although it expects

improvement in the second half of this year and into 1998. A week earlier, NatWest Securities issued a "sell" rating on the shares, noting that investors can get a similar yield on gilts with less risk.

NatWest's concern centres on the fact that steel-using industries are in decline in Europe and that growth industries have little use for steel. In addition, some analysts are concerned that British Steel will not be able to maintain its dividend through the next economic downturn.

On a more positive note, the company has a strong cashflow that should help it through the next downturn and is unlikely to face much competition from US steel producers, who are busy with buoyant demand at home. Similarly, its extremely low cost base will help it through times of trouble. And some analysts believe its dividend level is sustainable even if profits slide.

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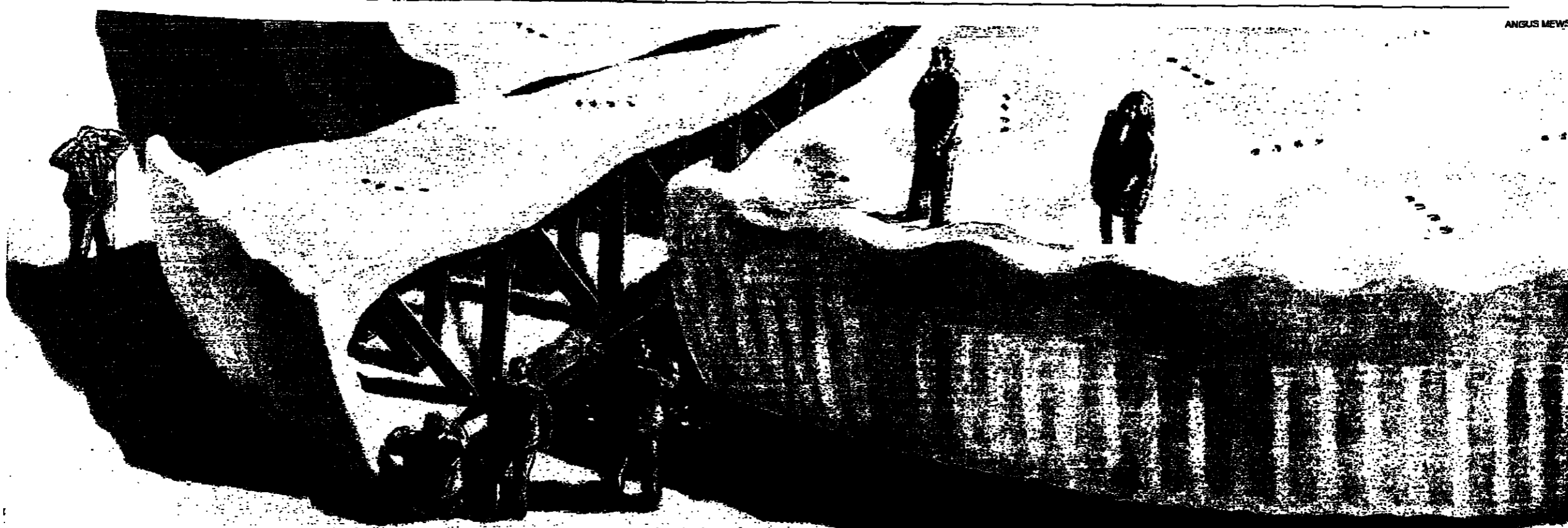
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11/10/96

Adam Jones on the possible pitfalls for investors when they are offered investment trust warrants



Warrants, when they are exercised, can also store up problems for the future by diluting the value of existing holdings. There are suddenly more shares, so the slices of the pie get smaller

Buy five and get one free, but can warrants be such a bargain?

It sounds like the kind of offer you find in your local supermarket — buy five, get one free. But in the world of investment trusts, things aren't quite so simple.

Increasingly, people buying into new investment trusts find they get a little extra — a warrant for every five shares they purchase.

A warrant is an option — but not an obligation — to buy a further share at a fixed price in the future. Typically, this exercise price is 100p.

The idea is that the share price of the investment trust will soar past this mark, leaving the warrant holder with the happy knowledge that they can exercise their right to buy new shares at a ridiculously cheap price.

Or they could sell the warrant, as they can be traded independently of the shares. The equity lists in newspapers are full of warrant prices, nestling just beneath the main entry for the ordinary shares of that investment trust. Their value could be anything from a few pence to pounds.

This price is not just dependent on the value of the underlying share. Warrants have a fixed lifespan — ten years or so. Beyond this point, they cannot be exercised and are worthless. And in general, the more time they have left on them, the greater their value.

WARRANTS TO WATCH

IN its latest commentary on the market, SBC Warburg recommended the following warrants.

□ Fidelity European Values (129p, with five years to run)

□ Martin Currie European (47.75p, with two years to run)

□ Mercury European Privatisation (31.75p, with eight years to run)

□ English & Scottish (61.25p, with a year and a half to run).

□ Prolife's Income trust has also been tipped by analysts as cheap, as has Templeton Emerging Markets and the Central European Growth investment trust.

The Association of Investment Trust Companies (0171 431 5222) provides detailed information on warrant performance in its monthly bulletins.

The advantage of selling for warrant holders is that it can enable them to realise some of the potential gains, without having to shell out on new shares — they may not have the capital. But this assumes there will be a buyer, by no means a certainty. Charles Cade, a Merrill Lynch analyst, points out: "Warrants are fairly illiquid." With only one warrant for each five shares, it is easy to see why they might be harder to shift than the ordinary shares.

So why are warrants there, complicating life? Basically, they make the investment

trust look sexier when it launches. Most trusts go to a discount when they start trading, meaning their share price has dropped beneath the issue price. If the fund managers bundle warrants into the deal, they can improve the price, simply because warrants encourage the market to look at how the shares will be performing in the longer term. This sleight-of-hand generally leads to a more favourable rating.

John Szymanowski, an SBC Warburg analyst, says: "They are transferring future value into today's valuation." But it can also store up problems for the future.

Warrants, when they are exercised, dilute the value of existing holdings — there are suddenly more shares, so the slices of the pie get smaller. And as the assets of the investment trust grow, the dilutive effect of warrant exercise gets bigger.

Of course, unexercised warrants are an insurance policy against getting left behind when other people exercise theirs. But you should exercise as late as possible to ensure that you are not throwing away the value that the time element has created. Mr Cade says shareholders are often

spooked into dumping the warrants too early.

So what about buying warrants for their own sake? Beware, warrants are among the most sophisticated and volatile investments open to a private individual. Warrants are geared, meaning they magnify market movements. Great if things are on the up, but potentially ruinous on the return journey. A 5p fall in the underlying ordinary share, for instance, may be matched with a 5p fall in the warrant. The share price will be denied. The warrant price, which can be as much as 30 times smaller, will be devastated by this like-for-like behaviour.

Not for beginners, then, and even not for many confident private investors. A lot of the information useful for the analysis of warrant prices simply isn't available to the general public.

Warrant valuation is very much a science, and there are still disagreements among professionals as to the best method. But that said, there are rumblings in the City that the warrant market is underpriced in relation to ordinary shares.

Mr Szymanowski says: "Warrants in their own right offer some very attractive opportunities. At the moment, there are lots of them that look very cheap." He says investors should look for a long life on the warrants, combined with a low premium and high gearing (the price of the ordinary share divided by the price of the warrant).

Investors should also look at the yield on the ordinary shares, says Mr Cade. If lots of income is being paid out, capital growth will be suffering — this can be bad news for warrant holders.

A final warning. The warrant market may look cheap but this may be getting things back to front. It may be that the ordinary market is overpriced, making warrants look good.

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Helen Pridham on permanent health insurance

Finding the proper policy is hard work

A part from receiving a good medical treatment, the most important thing you need if you are ill is a continuing income. Most people appear to ignore this fact in their financial planning.

Only one in ten of the working population has insurance that will provide a replacement income if they are unable to work because of ill-health. Insurers had been hoping for an upsurge in sales of this insurance, known as permanent health insurance, or PHI, when the Government reduced state sickness benefits last year and toughened its stance towards claimants.

Statistics indicate that the Department of Social Security is currently halfway to removing around 200,000 people who are considered fit for work from the incapacity payroll.

The Government's announcement in the last Budget that income payments from PHI policies would be tax-free after April was also seen as an extra boost. Sales have now begun to pick up this year, but progress is slow.

Not everyone needs PHI. Indeed, earlier this year the Office of Fair Trading criticised insurers for exaggerating the case for taking it out. For example, if you are on a low income or your employer offers a generous sick pay scheme, there may be little point.

On the other hand, if you are on an average or above average income and on short-term contract or self-employed, PHI is well worth considering. Otherwise you could find maintaining your standard of living during a prolonged period of ill-health extremely difficult.

Cost is the factor that puts most people off, though this may be because most salesmen are anxious to sell the maximum level of cover — typically for around 50 per cent of your income.

Alan Lakey, an independent financial adviser, of Highclere Financial Services, Hemel Hempstead, has adopted a different approach. He says: "I encourage clients to take out enough PHI to cover their mortgage payments initially to keep premiums at affordable levels and then suggest increases later to cover other outgoings."

Comparing costs is difficult because most PHI policies nowadays have variable premiums which are reviewed periodically, typically every five years. Some also have an investment element that means charges, and investment performance can also impact on future premiums. A small number of companies such as Friends Provident and Swiss Life are still charging fixed premiums. Their premi-



The low-paid can look askance at PHI but it may be a better deal for the executive

COST OF COVER

Monthly premium for benefit of £500 per month for a male aged 30 next birthday to age 60 with 13 weeks deferred with indexed benefit

	Class 1 occupation	Class 3 occupation
Allied Dunbar	£15.00	£ 37.13
Black Horse Life	£12.95	£24.19
Canada Life	£13.00	£17.66
Friends Provident	£11.74	£17.42
Norwich Union	£10.00	£16.33
Permanent	£9.74	£26.04
Sun Alliance	£11.82	£18.81
Swiss Life	£12.98	£22.40
Zurich Life	£11.50	£19.15

*Fixed premiums
Source: The Research Department

ums can be higher initially.

Clive Scott Hopkins of Towry Law, independent advisers, favours fixed premium policies. He believes that prospective policyholders should think twice before taking out a variable premium policy.

"They may be cheaper at first but the premiums have a habit of increasing after each review so that you can end up paying more than with a fixed premium policy," he says.

When taking out PHI, you will probably have to compromise on how quickly a policy will start to pay out benefits. Most people would like pay-

ments to start immediately they become ill, but not only is it difficult to find companies that offer this option, the cost is considerably more than if you are prepared to wait for, say, eight or 13 weeks.

However, Mr Lakey points out: "Bear in mind when choosing a waiting period that because companies make payments monthly in arrears you will actually have to wait four weeks longer for your money than you may expect initially."

Benefits will be paid until you return to work, but if your poor health proves to be a permanent condition and you

are unable to return to work, a PHI policy will continue to pay out until you reach your normal retirement age.

Always look carefully at how disability is defined. There are three variations. Some insurers define it as your inability to perform "any" occupation. This means if you could still do some kind of work, the company will not pay you any benefit.

Others define it as the inability to perform your own occupation or one which is "reasonably suitable".

The third and the best definition is based on your ability to perform your own occupation only. Your occupation is also decisive in determining the level of premium you must pay. Insurers generally band occupations into four categories or "classes" according to the level of risk they believe is involved. The lowest premiums are charged to those in office-based, clerical and administrative-type occupations. The highest premiums are payable by people in higher risk jobs involving heavy manual work.

Health insurance guide, part six next week

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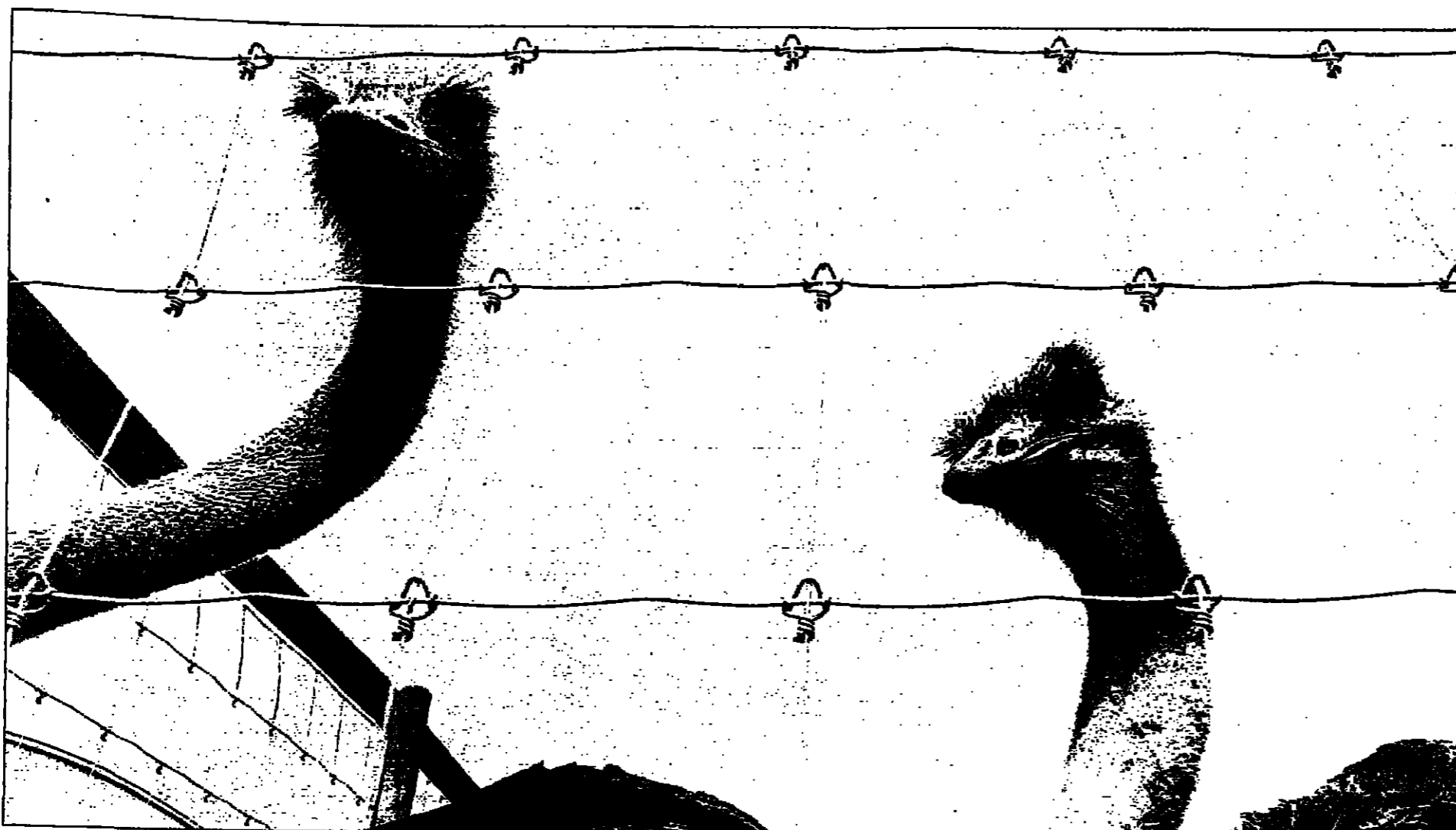
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The sorry saga of the Ostrich Farming Corporation underlines the need to carry out research before parting with your cash, particularly when the scheme is unregulated

How to give dodgy deals the bird

Karen Zagor on taking steps to safeguard your investment

For the 2,700 investors who parted with about £22 million in the hope of making a fortune by buying ostriches through the Ostrich Farming Corporation, news that their money has been siphoned off through a series of US companies is just another blow in a painful saga, as is the report that not all investors' birds have been identified.

It now seems certain that investors will lose a large chunk of their stake. Many paid up to £17,700 for the birds, which have a market value of no more than £400. Those whose birds have been identified now have a choice of leaving them where they are — on a farm in Belgium — and paying £637 for livery to the end of this year, or removing them at a cost of £600. They could also sell or abandon the birds.

One of the most galling aspects is that alarmed regulators had been watching the Ostrich Farming Corporation's activities for more than a year before moving to protect investors. The Securities and Investment Board (SIB) was first to become concerned, but ultimately decided that the company's activities fell outside its jurisdiction because inves-

tors were buying birds, not a financial product. SIB passed its notes to the Department of Trade and Industry, which took almost a year before acting to close down the company on public-interest grounds in April.

As the Ostrich Farming Corporation — and the Alchemy pyramid-selling operation before it — illustrate, you cannot count on the regulators to protect you from a dodgy scheme. Clever operators will always find a way round the rules.

Investors in the Ostrich Farming Corporation were not ignorant or illiterate; many had run their own businesses and had done some research into the company beforehand. Yet they might have been spared if they had paid attention to the warning signs:

■ **Promise of exceptional returns:** The corporation said investors could count on profits of at least 51.6 per cent a year for five years. But if a company promises outstanding returns, make sure it is using compound annual growth, not simply

adding up percentages for every year. If a company is not using the accepted method, it is already promising more than it can deliver.

In addition, financial advisers note that the biggest profits are made by early investors in a company, usually friends, family and business associates. The real money is in spotting the trend.

■ **Unsubstantiated guarantees:** If a company offers a guarantee, find out what is behind it. If it is based on a market performing in a certain way over a certain period and is not backed by real funds, it is not worth much. Similarly, if a company says its product is insured, find out the insurer's name and ask them what the insurance covers. In the case of the Ostrich Farming Corporation, the literature said the birds were insured but there was no underwriter.

■ **Lack of Audited Information:** Investors should always check to see when a company was incorporated and remember that the absence of a track record is not the same as a good

business record. After a company is incorporated, it does not have to file an audited financial statement with Companies House for 18 months. The OFC did provide a balance sheet, but it had not been audited.

Many Ostrich Farming Corporation investors did their homework by contacting business information groups before parting with their money. In at least one case, a well-known agency gave OFC a clean bill of health because there was nothing negative known about the company.

■ **The Hard Sell:** During its last months of business, the corporation told investors that prices would rise shortly. It is never a good idea to invest under pressure. Take your time and do some research. Do not accept the statistics given out — if the figures are attributed to a legitimate organisation, check that it still stands by the information. The OFC quoted research from Dun & Bradstreet in its literature, but the information was many years out of date and Dun &

Bradstreet had not given permission for it to be used.

If you are looking at a farming investment, for example, try to find independent vets and farmers to find out about the animals, their breeding patterns, survival rates and what the market looks like.

■ **Lavish Spending:** If a company is spending heavily on videos, glossy literature, elaborate offices and events it is worth asking where the money is coming from. If it is a new company without the backing of a wealthy parent, the money could be from investors' funds.

■ **Absence of Regulatory Protection:** If an investment falls outside the regulatory framework, it may have been structured that way for a reason. Investments in animals and objects are exempt from the rules that apply to the financial services sector.

Literature does not have to comply with guidelines set by City regulators and, if the company collapses, investors will not be protected by the Investors Compensation Scheme. There are legitimate unregulated investments, but if you are putting money into an unregulated venture, make sure you can afford to lose it.

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while Sarah Jones looks at low-risk with-profit bonds

It can take time to earn the best rates

The with-profit bond is being hailed as the safe alternative to paltry building society rates. But be warned, pick your provider carefully to get the best returns, and it must be seen as a long-term investment.

The top with profit bonds, which are lower risk investments, are currently the best alternative to cash deposits. These deposits are now providing the lowest returns for 143 years," says David Aaron of David Aaron Partnership, independent financial advisers.

The latest guide to with-profit bonds from David Aaron shows that the average five-year returns after charges and basic rate tax have risen to 8 per cent, compared with 7.6 per cent a year ago.

However, the report also shows the gulf between the best and worst performers. The best are Prudential (10 per cent net of basic rate tax, over five years to April), General Accident (9.8 per cent) and Sun Life (8.4 per cent). That compares with Axa Equity & Law (7 per cent), Legal & General (6.9 per cent) and London & Manchester (6.4 per cent).

With-profit bonds are



Average five-year returns after charges have risen to 8 per cent

aimed at traditional building society investors seeing their capital eroded by inflation. A with-profit bond, on the other hand, should produce growth over and above inflation.

Mr Aaron gives the example of Sun Life which, over the past five years, has returned 8.4 per cent a year. Take inflation into account and that is a real return of 5.5 per cent, compared with an annualised building society return of 4.6 per cent.

Until a few years ago with-profit policies could only be bought as regular premium whole of life or long-term savings plans, but now several major life companies are offering lump sum with-profit policies. As with other investment bonds, you give a lump sum to the life assurance company, which invests your money along with that of other investors in stocks and shares and government securities.

The return on with-profit bonds is calculated differently from other bonds. The company manages the increase in the fund's value, to even out the rise and fall in the value at different times. It does this by retaining some of the increase in the value so that it can allocate a bonus at the end of each year, even in bad years.

and can also allocate a terminal bonus at the end of your term of investment.

"These bonds are only for people who recognise they need to invest for capital growth but can't stand much more risk than the building society," says Yvonne Rose of Diane Saunders, independent financial advisers. "If they can cope with the risk I would suggest unit or investment trusts instead."

With-profit bonds can provide a 5 per cent tax-free income for all taxpayers but higher-rate taxpayers will have to pay some tax on their profits when they cash their policies in.

Basic-rate taxpayers can take any withdrawals free of tax and penalties up to 7.5 per cent in most cases, but take out more than the bonuses have earned and you will be eating into capital.

It is the use of bonuses to smooth out market fluctuations, together with its type of investments, that makes with-profit bonds low-risk. However, low risk also means slow

WITH PROFIT LEAGUE TABLE

PERFORMANCE TABLE: LUMP SUM £10,000 INTO A WITH PROFITS BOND

Company	Compound Annual Return 5 yrs to 1.1.96 (or since launch if less than 5 yrs)	Real return after inflation over 5 years to 1.1.96	5 Yr Returns Up or down since Oct 1995
PRUDENTIAL	10%	7.1%	Up to 1.8%
GENERAL ACCIDENT	9.8%	6.9%	Up to 0.7%
SUN LIFE	8.4%	5.5%	Down 0.5%
EQUITABLE	8.1%	5.2%	Down 0.2%
SCOTTISH PROVIDENT	7.9%	5.0%	n/a
ROYAL	7.8%	4.9%	Up 0.3%

Notes: Not of basic rate tax.

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Bank of Scotland Banking Direct Instant Access Savings Account	4.41%	4.50%	4.89%	5.00%	5.37%	5.50%	5.37%	5.50%
Abbey National Investment (90 Day Notice)	3.15%	3.15%	3.35%	3.35%	4.00%	4.00%	4.55%	4.55%
Halifax Solid Gold (90 Day Notice)	2.75%	2.75%	3.05%	3.05%	3.80%	3.80%	4.30%	4.30%
Woolwich Premier 90 (90 Day Notice)	N/A	N/A	3.10%	3.10%	3.85%	3.85%	4.60%	4.60%

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THE TIMES MONEY INFORMATION SERVICE

Beat the system with new guide

A new guide from Which? will show you how to cut through the red tape. Which? Way to Beat the System steers you through the main bureaucracies that govern our lives, from the NHS to the education system. The guide gives practical advice on how to choose a GP or a school and reveals how to enlist the support of your MP on a local issue. Your rights, including those in the Citizen's Charter, are explained, as well as how and when to make use of councillors, ombudsmen and regulators. Available from bookshops or by calling 0800 252100 - price £9.99.

For those thinking of setting up a trust, the Inland Revenue has produced a useful guide to the basic types of private family trust and how they are taxed. The trusts covered are bare trusts, interest in possession, discretionary, accumulation and mixed trusts. The booklet explains what to do when a trust is created and when it ceases. Trusts is available from your local tax inquiry centre or tax office.

Self-employed homebuyers often have difficulty in finding the right mortgage to meet their needs, particularly those

with a fluctuating cashflow. LBC Home Loans thinks it has the answer. The "Really Useful Mortgage" allows borrowers to withdraw or repay funds without incurring an early settlement charge or further advance fees. The mortgage is also available to those who are unable to provide accounts. For a quotation, call 0645 401400.

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With 57 per cent of overseas UK payments under £2,000, the Royal Bank of Scotland has launched a cheaper way to send money abroad. The low-cost solution - Royworld Budget - is available through Royal Bank branches to both customers and non-customers. A single flat fee of £9 is charged and payment will be received within four to six days.

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Rates as at October 3, 1996

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10,000	AIG Life	4.95
20,000	AIG Life	5.05
50,000	AIG Life	5.10
2 Years		
1,000	Premium Life	4.45
3,000	ITT Lon & Edin	5.70
20,000	AIG Life	5.75
50,000	AIG Life	5.85
3 Years		
1,000	Premium Life	5.00
3,000	ITT Lon & Edin	6.10
4 Years		
1,000	Premium Life	5.35
3,000	ITT Lon & Edin	6.35
5 Years		
1,000	Premium Life	5.65
3,000	ITT Lon & Edin	6.90

Source: Chamberslain de Bore 0171-434 4232. Net rates. Income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender. Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.

SAVERS' BEST BUYS

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
INSTANT ACCESS ACCOUNTS				
Teachers' BS 01202 887171	Bullion	Instant	£500	4.80 %Yy
Alliance & Leicester 0645 228858	Instant Direct	Post	£5,000	5.40 %Yy
Bristol & West BS 0800 901109	Instant Post	Post	£10,000	5.85 %Yy
Bristol & West BS 0800 901109	Inst Acc Post	Post	£25,000	6.05 %Yy
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS				
Chesham BS 0800 182351	POST-tel 20 day	20 day p	£5,000	6.05 %Yy
Chesham & Glouce 0800 717505	Direct 30	30 day p	£100	5.50 %Yy
Greenwich BS 0181 858 8212	One Yr Term Str	1 year	£25,000	6.50 %Yy
Yorkshire BS 0800 378836	Fixed Rate Bond	31.3.98	£5,000	6.60 F/OM
FIRST TESSAS (TAX FREE)				
Sun Banking Corp 01438 744505	Fixed rate	5 year	£8,575	7.50 F/Yy
NatWest Bank 0800 200400	Fixed rate	5 year	£5,000	7.45 F/Yy
Birmingham Midshires 0645 720721	Fixed rate	5 year	£1,000	7.00 F/Yy
Principality BS 01222 344188	Fixed rate	5 year	£500	6.80 F/Yy

CREDIT CARDS

Card type	Interest per month	APR%	Fee per annum
Co-operative Bank 0800 108000	Advantage Visa	0.64%NC	7.90%N
Robert Fleming/S&P 0800 825024	MasterCard/Visa	0.80%NC	11.20%N
RB of Scotland 0122 348393	Master/WorldwideM	0.95%NC	12.90%N

PERSONAL LOANS BEST BUYS

APR	Monthly payment on £3,000 for 3yrs with insurance	Monthly payment on £3,000 for 3yrs no insurance
Direct Line 0141 248 9966	13.90%K	£112.86
Alliance & Leicester 0118 2626262	14.80%K	£114.93
Midland 0800 180180	14.90%K	£115.82

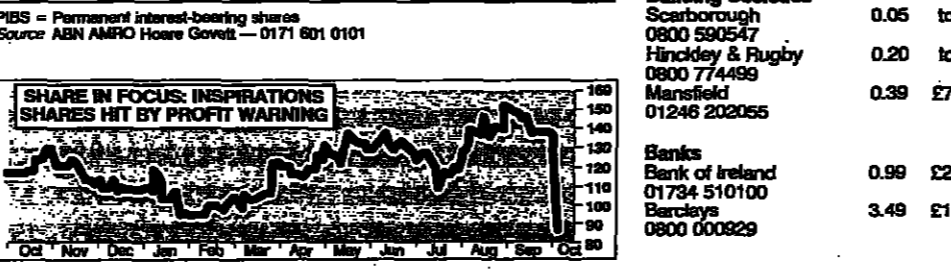
No. C = no interest free period, E = available to comprehensive motor insurance policy holders over 22 years, F = Fixed Rate (all other rates variable), N = introductory rate for a limited period, P = By Post only
* RATES SHOWN ARE GROSS AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE
PLEASE CHECK RATES BEFORE INVESTING
Source: Moneyfacts, the Monthly Guide to Investment & Mortgage Rates (01692 500 577)

PIBS

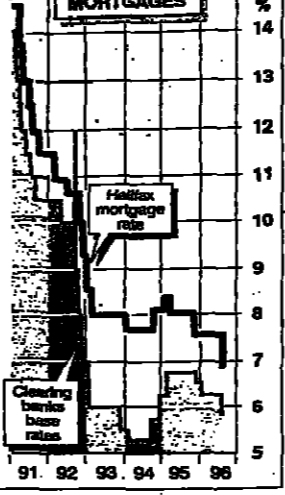
FIXED RATE						Lender	Interest rate %
	Gross coupon	Buying price	% Gross yield	Issue price	Minimum purchase amount		
Birmingham Midshires	9.375%	102.51	9.137	100.17	1,000	Building Societies Alliance & Leic	1.39 £200
Bradford & Bingley	11.625%	123.03	9.449	100.13	10,000	0161 749 0471	
Bradford & Bingley	13.000%	138.60	9.379	100.20	10,000	Northern Rock	0.99 £100
Bristol & West	13.375%	143.08	9.348	100.34	1,000	0800 591500	
Britannia	13.000%	138.01	9.419	100.42	1,000	Bristol & West	1.95
Coventry	12.125%	130.29	9.282	100.75	1,000	0800 603085	
First National	11.750%	121.76	9.850	100.25	10,000	Banks	
Halifax	8.750%	96.24	9.092	100.62	50,000	Bank of Ireland	0.99 £200
Halifax	12.000%	128.76	9.082	100.28	50,000	01734 510100	
Leeds & Holbeck	13.625%	148.27	9.189	100.00	50,000	Barclays Bank	3.49 £100
Newcastle	13.375%	143.61	9.189	100.00	1,000	0800 000629	
Newcastle	12.625%	139.42	9.056	100.45	1,000		
Northampton	12.625%	139.81	9.030	100.14	1,000		
Skipton	12.875%	138.58	9.291	100.45	1,000		

PIBS = Permanent Interest-bearing Shares
Source: ABN AMRO House Guest - 0171 801 0101

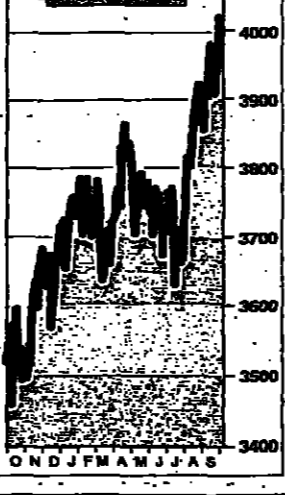
SHARE IN FOCUS: INSPIRATIONS



BASE RATES V MORTGAGES



FT-SE 100 PRICE INDEX



NATIONAL SAVINGS

Gross rate	At tax rates	Min/maximum investment	Notice	Contd.
Ordinary A/c	1.50	1.20 - 0.90	10-10,000**	0645 645000
Investment A/c*	4.75	3.80 - 2.85	20-500**	0645 645000
Income Bond*	6.00	4.80 - 3.60	2k-25k**	0645 645000
First Opt Bond	8.00	4.80 - 3.60	1,000-50k*	0645 645000
43rd Issue Certificate	5.35		100-1,000	0645 645000
Children's Bond*	5.65	5.32 - 3.99	100-250,000	0645 645000
Gen Est Rate	5.65		100-1,000	0645 645000
Capital Bonds*	5.65	5.32 - 3.99	100-250,000	0645 645000
9th Index Unlinked*	2.50		100-1,000	0645 645000
Pennine Bond SS*	7.00	5.60 - 4.20	500-50,000	0645 645000

* Best £70 (£140 if at tax free, and access for up to £100 - additional helps to £20,000 for investment proceeds - 1 year free. Rates gross and vide - 20,000 when held for 5 years. 4.25 net bonus for £20,000 - £100,000 in 5 years to £1 and £2 holdings. Taxable but cash in full. ** 100-100,000 earn higher rates. ** Tiered rates apply

PENSION ANNUITIES

All figures are the gross annual annuity (£100,000 purchase), guaranteed 5 years, paid monthly in advance

SINGLE LIFE (level ann)	Male: Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Canada Life.....Level	£10,166	£11,332	£12,912
Sun Lf of Can.....Level	£10,255	£11,285	£12,693
Generall.....Level	£10,248	£11,274	£12,612
Standard Lf.....Level	£10,136	£11,121	£12,584
Equitable Lf.....Level	£10,777	£11,187	£12,397
SINGLE LIFE	Female: Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Sun Lf of Can.....Level	£9,526	£10,252	£11,330
Prudential.....Level	£9,504	£10,248	£11,340
Generall.....Level	£9,357	£10,200	£11,369
Canada Lf.....Level	£9,340	£10,176	£11,403
Stalwart*.....Level	£9,192	£10,065	£10,952
JOINT LIFE 2/3 WIDOWS (level annuity)	Male: Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Stalwart*.....Level	£9,235	£10,008	£10,840
Sun Lf of Can.....Level	£9,158	£9,720	£10,483
Prudential.....Level	£9,076	£9,660	£10,483
Generall.....Level	£9,043	£9,585	£10,509
Canada Lf.....Level	£8,927	£9,583	£10,514

* Minimum purchase £100,000. Higher rates for smokers. Source: Which? Guide (0171 336 8367)

Compiled by: Lizanne Rose

FIRST-TIME BUYERS

Lender	Interest rate %	Loan size	Max %	Notes
Building Societies				
Bristol & West	0.95	£15k+	95	6.04% disc 6 mth then 1% disc 6 mth
0800 608088				3.25% disc 12 months
Lambeth	3.74	£15k+	95	2.50% discount for 12 months
0171 828 1331				
Newbury	4.24	£15-150k	85	2.50% discount for 12 months
01635 43676				
Banks				
Barclays	0.99	£20-145k	95	6.25% disc 6 mths
01734 510100				3.74% disc 6 mths
TSB Bank	3.25	£15k+	95	3.74% disc for 12 months
0500 758000				

Larger lenders, larger loans and first-time buyers tables supplied by Ray's Guides Ltd. Further information: Ray's Guides, 01753 890462.

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WEEKEND MONEY LETTERS

Time to end employee complacency over pensions

From Mr P. Sayers
 Sir, Anne Ashworth (Weekend Money, September 28) refers to the catalyst of the Pensions Act in the move to money purchase provision. As the organisation which drew up the "beige, pink and rust" mentioned in the article, the complexities and cost of the new legislation are all too apparent to us.

However, whether or not employers change the way they provide pensions, the main problem is indeed one of employee complacency. With

the State looking to cut back its expenditure and employers seriously questioning whether they wish to continue making open-ended promises, raising employees' awareness of the cost of an adequate pension and the need for greater personal responsibility will be vital if poverty in old age is to be avoided.

Ironically, switching to money purchase could stimulate this awareness. However, a big challenge awaits regulators, financial journalists and advisers.

Coming clean on currency charges

From Mr G. Edwards
 Sir, Your correspondent last week ("Punitive Cost of Money Transfers", Weekend Money, September 28) gives the clearest explanation yet of why a single European currency will bring few benefits to travellers and business. His bankers have made nearly £60 from him for doing very little other than to use their computer links for a few micro fractions of a second.

With the huge profits to be made from cross-border travel and transactions ("never mind the currency, feel the distance"), banks are not going to give up this type of income. As the disappearance of commission charges for currency exchange is one of the central planks of the argument for monetary union, the banks are being less than honest with the public.

Their own employees in the exchange sector of their business might also wish to know their true plans. Yours faithfully,
 BRIAN G. REES,
 20 Rectory Close,
 Sarn, Bridgend,
 Mid-Glamorgan.

Company schemes 'only generous to a minority'

From Mr B.G. Rees
 Sir, Sara McConnell and Adam Jones's article on the "pensions scandal" (Weekend Money, September 28) is a fair statement of its origins and the slow progress of the industry-wide review of mis-sold pensions.

However, the article repeats the often misleading assertion that members had opted out of "generous company pension schemes".

Company pensions are invariably only generous to that minority of employees who

are fortunate to become long-serving or the higher-paid.

The majority of members — those who leave for whatever reason before pensionable age or who are low-paid, receive far less generous treatment. Frozen company pensions — expressed in transfer values — very rarely reflect the accrued value of pension contributions made by employees, let alone any made by employers, supposedly on their behalf.

Much of the value of such contributions instead of going to such employees has ended

up in pension surpluses utilised by employers to boost company performance and, indirectly, enrich directors and shareholders.

Company pension administrators have shed a lot of crocodile tears over pensions mis-selling, as evidenced by some of the obstacles being put in the way of re-instatement.

Yours faithfully,
 BRIAN G. REES,
 20 Rectory Close,
 Sarn, Bridgend,
 Mid-Glamorgan.

Australia offers transfer solution

From Mr B.D. Roden
 Sir, Mr P. Ward's letter (Weekend Money, September 28) illustrates a tale many of us know well. Bankers in this country wring their hands over the need to make these charges, but they are unnecessary.

This past 12 months my daughter in Australia has been repaying a loan and has remitted amounts from £300 up to a recent payment of £1,400. She draws a cheque in pounds sterling on the State Bank of New South Wales, which has links with Citibank in London — the cost to her is 45p; the cost to me, nil.

It may be a little slower than electronic banking. The most recent cheque was dated September 24, 1996. It was sent airmail and reached me yes-

A hop, skip and a jump and it'll be in a Limey Bank. Costs less than a short London taxi fare, Sheila



GED

terday, September 28. Of course, it will be another three or four days before the electronics catch up and the money is credited to me but full marks to State Bank for their charges, and to the mail

services for their delivery.

Yours faithfully,
 BRIAN RODEN,
 Alexandra House,
 Harrowden Road,
 Wellingborough,
 Northants.

Direct approach solves problems

From Mr V. Wales
 Sir, There are two simple answers to Mr Mendoza's problem (Weekend Money Letters, September 28).

The more useful is to move his bank account to First Direct. This bank will, at the cost of a locally charged phone call (less than the price of a stamp), pay his visa account by transfer four working days ahead of the due date.

First Direct will also pay telephone bills, utility charges and any other regular payments. All that is required is to notify the amounts and the dates. They have done this for me for a long time without a hitch.

Less radical and, to my mind, of help limited to this one problem is to arrange for the visa account to be dated later in the month. If they decline to do this, then change to another visa supplier who

will. Most are willing to oblige.

Yours faithfully,
 VIVIAN WALES,
 Bay Trees,
 Green Street,
 Brockworth, Gloucester.

Currency overkill

From Ms M. Haskell
 Sir, Instituting a single currency to reduce the punitive cost of cross border currency transfers (Weekend Money Letters, September 28) seems like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. It must be within the expertise of the Brussels bureaucracy to lay down a scale of reasonable charges with fines for transgression. I'd have thought this would have been one of the first outcomes of the single market.

Yours faithfully,
 MARGARET HASKELL,
 13 Park Vista,
 London SE10.

Impartial inefficiency

From Mr L. Rose
 Sir, Mr Shaun Coles asks in his letter of September 28 what would have happened if the Revenue's error had been made on his side, causing an underpayment.

I can reassure him the answer is very probably nothing. After 35 years in the Revenue (now retired), I can tell him that that department has always been completely impartial in its inefficiency.

Yours sincerely,
 L. ROSE,
 1 Chatsworth Road,
 High Lane,
 Stockport,
 Cheshire.

Inland Revenue was too generous in calculating refund for AVC

From Mr Vic Septon

Sir, Shaun Coles (Weekend Money Letters, September 28) may regret writing to you as the Inland Revenue have been over-generous to him.

The original refund given to him on his additional voluntary contribution (AVC) was too low, but the later one is too high.

Mr Coles states that his £2,000 AVC was credited as a gross contribution, in which case he already has the benefit of the basic rate of tax of 25 per cent being reclaimed by his pension

provider and added to his net contribution.

The additional tax relief he is due is the difference between the higher rate of tax of 40 per cent and the relief he has already been allowed of 25 per cent on the gross contribution of £2,000, i.e. £300.

As he has already received a refund of £130.40, the additional refund he should have received is £169.60, and not £300.

Yours faithfully,
 VIC SEPTON,
 18 Nook Road,
 Scholes,
 Leeds.

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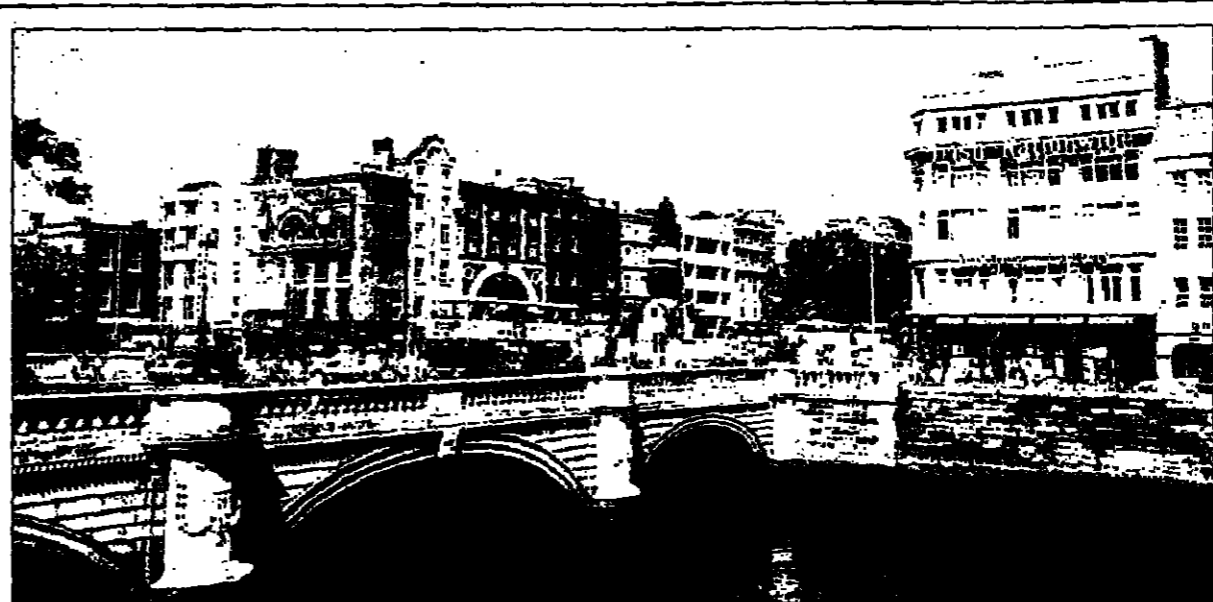
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Electioneering has moved offshore to Dublin where Sarah Jones says its roll-up will offer good returns

Offshore fund is capital idea

Electioneering has moved offshore. Murray Johnstone says that the claim that its Dublin-based roll-up fund will give better returns than the bank or building society is "one election promise that won't be broken".

Richard Elliott Lockhart, director of retail marketing at Murray Johnstone, says: "As we approach the election people are increasingly uncertain about how their investments will be treated by a new government. If you believe income and capital gains taxes will be increased, you might well wish to ringfence part of your assets through using an offshore roll-up fund."

The Murray Financials Bond Fund invests in short-term gilts, which are considered less risky in a period of fluctuating interest rates. The fund manager claims that

this compares well with the popular corporate bond Peps which invest in more volatile medium and long-dated corporate bonds and may suffer capital losses if interest rates rise. But the main benefit of the offshore fund is that it

allows you to defer tax liability. Income accumulates or rolls up gross along with capital gains, all of which is reflected in the share price. As there is no tax liability until shares are sold, investors build up assets unfettered and pay tax only when it suits them.

It is possible to take an income from the fund, by selling some shares in the fund. Tax here is also reduced because you only pay income tax on the difference between the buying and selling price of the shares. That works out at considerably less tax than you would have to pay on interest earned from a building society account.

The only slight blip is that since the sale of shares is taxed as income (at the investor's marginal rate of tax) there is no opportunity to utilise capital gains allowances.

The current annual yield of the Murray Financials Bond is 5.82 per cent. There is a 2 per cent initial charge and annual management charges

which add up to 1.05 per cent. "It can be a neat trick if you want to invest in short-term bonds and are happy to roll-up offshore," says Mark Bolland, of Chamberlain de Broe, the independent financial adviser. "It suits someone who wants to accumulate capital offshore a few years before retiring to another tax haven like Jersey, or an investor who wants income within a balanced tax-efficient portfolio."

It may concern potential investors that the product is not regulated by UK law. Since the fund is registered in Dublin, if anything should go wrong investors would not be protected by UK regulations. However, Murray Johnstone has a good long-term record as an investment house.

SARAH JONES

HOR MISS

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[illegible]

GOLF: WOOSNAM MISSES CUT AT GERMAN OPEN TO LEAVE SCOT ON VERGE OF TAKING ORDER OF MERIT

Montgomery closes in on No 1 status

FROM DAVID MILLER
IN BERLIN

BARRING injury or multiple aberrations today or tomorrow, Colin Montgomery is assured of becoming European No 1 for a fourth consecutive year. His expected achievement was confirmed with a five-under par second round of 67 in the German Masters at Motzener See Golf and Country Club, where Ian Woosnam, his only rival, missed the cut.

Montgomery had an eagle three at the 525-yard par-five 2nd and six birdies to counter another double bogey here yesterday it was a seven at the long 5th, where he was in rough off the tee, pulled his recovery into a bunker left of the green, overhit his sand wedge and then muffed his first attempted chip back onto the green.

Now standing on 137, equal fifteenth at seven-under, he must finish in the top 40 to secure the prize-money of £4,313 that will place him beyond Woosnam's reach in the Volvo Masters in Spain.

Partnering Ernie Els, the South African who added a 67 to his first-round 68 to be equal fourth on nine-under, seems to agree with Montgomery. "I enjoy playing with Ernie, he brings out the best in me," the Scot said. "Unfortunately, it seems to do the same for him! It's annoying to have another double bogey, and but for that pair I'd be sharing the lead [with Paul McGinley, of Ireland] on 133."

Montgomery, making no mention of the European title while Woosnam was still on the course, was nonetheless glad to be in contention with the leaders. "Remember, I won the Irish Open this year after double bogeys and a triple bogey," he said. "I can't explain the mistakes, maybe it's a bit of pressure, the tension [of the European title], maybe lack of concentration. You think you've got it right, then the game comes back and bites you. But if 67 is the worst I do, I'm not worried."

His domination in Europe is a tribute to the steadiness of his driving and long irons, and control of his once-fallible temperament. The ultimate reward, success in one of the four majors, must surely come for someone so consistent.

Woosnam, who has hinted



Montgomery plays a short iron to the green at the par-three 3rd on his way to a five-under-par second round at Motzener See

that his back injury may require surgery at the end of the season, ended his hopes of making the cut when bunkered at the 16th. "I putted shocking," he said, before hurrying off to the airport. "My back's not too bad. That's it. It's all over. I can go home."

The other story of the day concerned the Ireland team for the Dunhill Cup next week. McGinley, Darren Clarke, on 134 and Padraig Harrington, on 135, being among the eight leaders divided by two strokes. Are they a week too early?

Clarke, who shared the best score of the day, 64, with Paul Broadhurst, hit 16 greens in regulation and had only 27 putts. Like Montgomery, he eagled the second, a drive and seven-iron leaving a 25ft putt that he holed. Yet length was as much a key to his round as the greens. "With most of the

bunkers here, I can fly the ball over them," Clarke said. "I've been playing really well for three or four weeks, but the good putts weren't going down. Now they came all in a day."

Harrington hit the flag stick

at the 17th, the ball bouncing

back eight feet, a misfortune

that cost him a possible hole-

in-one and a £60,000 Audi.

The ball was probably travel-

ling too fast. Other things

worried him more. "There are

five things I need to work on,

which is four too many," he

said. "I hit a lot of bad shots."

And, presumably, many good

ones.

McGinley has previously

won a tournament, though not

of significance. "It would be

nice to win with such a strong

field," he said, after an out-

ward half of four birdies for a

33.

Paul Eales, 33, from Royal

Lytham and sharing second

place with Clarke on 134, is

hoping to make this his second

tour victory—a big boost for a

steady, middle-order player

who was 44th in the order of

merit last year.

Great Britain and Ireland unless stated

LEADING QUALIFIERS: 133: P McGinley

66, 67, 134: D Clarke 70, 64; P Eales 67,

67, 135: M Mouldand 68, 69; E Els (SA) 68,

67; M Campbell (NZ) 67, 68; P Harrington

68, 67; P Broadhurst 71, 64; 136: P Selzer

66, 70; G Turner (NZ) 68, 68; M Davis 69,

67; M Ferry (Fr) 69, 70; M O'Connell 67, 71;

N Smith (Swi) 68, 67; 137: J Cozzens (Arg)

68, 71; C Montgomery 70, 67; D Carter

68, 68; J Lomas 69, 68; T Bjorn (Den) 71,

68; S Tilling (Den) 69, 68; P Mitchell

71, 67; M A. Jimenez (Sp) 68, 70; G Brand

J 68, 69; J van der Walde (Fr) 71, 67; J

Townsend (US) 68, 70; 138: A Calvert 68,

71; A Johnstone (Zim) 70, 69; M James

68, 70; J Haeggen (Swe) 69, 70; D A

Russell 67, 72; 140: M Jorzen (Swe) 68,

72; S Luria (Sp) 72, 68; P Price 70, 70;

B Lange (Ger) 71, 69; P O'Malley (Aus) 68,

72; C Coates (Fr) 68, 71.

Davies moves into the lead with hole in one

A HOLE IN ONE helped Laura Davies, of Great Britain, take a two-stroke lead after the second round of the Takara Invitational in Yokohama yesterday.

Davies, seeking her second victory of the year in Japan and her sixth overall, scored the hole in one with a nine-iron on the 154-yard 3rd hole. Davies's round of one eagle, four birdies and four bogeys over the 6,204-yard, par-72 Caledonian club course left her with a four-under-par total of 140, two shots ahead of Ayako Okamoto, Ikuyo Shiotani and Takasu Aiko.

"It was my fourth career ace and the second one in Japan," Davies said. "I was very nervous, but I was happy to get it. It was a great feeling."

Davies, the winner of four tournaments in the United States, two European events and one Japanese title so far this year, said Takasu had a 69 while Okamoto and Shiotani each shot a 71.

Caroline Pierce led the British offensive in the JAL Big Apple Classic in New York state, scoring a first-round 72 to finish one shot behind Dottie Pepper and Vicki Goetze, the leaders, who were the only golfers to make par.

Pierce's compatriot, Trish Johnson, managed a 76, while Pamela Wright and Stephanie Maynor fared a little better, returning solid 74s on the par 71 course.

Ballesteros troubled by captain's lot

David Miller hears Europe's leading man lament his restricted Ryder Cup choice

Severiano Ballesteros, who succeeded Bernard Gallacher as the Europe Ryder Cup captain, considers it likely that only defeat, through being prevented from exploiting the most suitable players, would alter the present selection system.

Bothered by his habitual back problems, Ballesteros yesterday struggled to make the cut in the German Masters. He feels equally frustrated over his position as captain of the team that, next year at Valderrama, will defend the trophy regained so memorably at Oak Hill, Rochester, last September.

"When a road has a dangerous curve, people try to get it altered," Ballesteros said yesterday, "but often there is no action until there has been a serious accident. Then people take notice. I made my request to the Ryder Cup committee not long after I was appointed, that the captain should have more than two optional places at his disposal, but this was turned down. Yes, maybe we must lose before it is realised that this can be an important factor. For the moment, the system is the system, and we take our luck. Some days it rains, some days it shines."

Several senior players, including Colin Montgomerie, believe that the whole team should be at the captain's discretion, rather than the top ten from the European order of merit being automatic choices, leaving two places vacant. The United States team operates a similar system, but the Americans are not at the disadvantage of having leading players performing outside their own tour.

Next year, Ballesteros's two optional selections seem likely to be Nick Faldo and Jesper Parnevik, of Sweden, both playing on the American tour. This would leave no room for including an established Ry-

der Cup player, with experience of the unique tensions of the competition, who happened to be outside the European top ten. With a competition that, in recent years, has regularly come down to the last two or three singles on the final day, when a half can determine the outcome, maximising selection possibilities is critical.

Ballesteros fondly recalls that first victory on United States soil, at Muirfield Village in 1987, and the importance of the team's collective morale. "It would be wonderful to recreate the mood we had then," he said.

One of those who nearly missed selection last year was Ian Woosnam, out of the top ten and only included when José María Olazábal became injured. The Ryder Cup table is determined over a year's tournaments, beginning with the British Masters on August 28 this year and ending on August 31 next year.

The argument for the top-ten system is that you get the players most in form. Yet this takes no account of temperament for team matchplay, as opposed to individual stroke-play. The difference is immeasurable.

The American system is based over a longer period than Europe's, starting at the beginning of 1986 and lasting until the US PGA tournament next year. More important, it also gives added weight to performances in the three majors in the United States.

The problem with the European system is that it is determined, in part, by those with no real experience of play at the sharp end. The Ryder Cup committee of six is divided equally between representatives of the PGA and the PGA European Tour, with the chairman having a casting vote. But the PGA representatives come from run-of-the-mill professionals.

For the moment, we must take our luck.

Canadian leader defies the aches and pains

BY MEL WEBB

KEN FULTON did not expect much from himself in the first round of the Motor City Seniors Classic yesterday. The Canadian was in agony with a back injury, the weather was cold and inhospitable with a near-gale ripping into his aching muscles. Imagine his surprise when he finished the day with a one-stroke lead.

Fulton, 52, had a 69, three under par, that put him one ahead of José Cabo, of Spain, with Bill Hardwick, another

Canadian, a further stroke back. The three leading Britons were John Morgan, David Creamer and Malcolm Gregson on level par. Tommy Horton, the warmest of pre-tournament favourites, could manage only a 74 and Peter Townsend, making his first senior appearance, a 78.

Fulton, the Canadian PGA Seniors champion, owes his presence at The Warwickshire to a holiday he was taking with one of his five daughters in Scotland last month. The Scottish Seniors Championship happened to be

on, he happened to have his clubs with him and, having made the cut there, decided to sample another course on the European seniors menu.

He was not at all sure he would make it all the way round. The torn muscle in his back, an injury picked up in Scotland, was giving him shooting pains. "At least there were no spasms, so I thought I might as well give it a go," he said. They clearly breed them tough in Bolton, Ontario, where Fulton is a partner in a golf course company. Having reached the turn in level par,

he had five birdies on the inward nine, which is the longer and more severe stretch of the course.

Also among the walking wounded was Creamer, who was to be seen in the club lounge after his 72 applying ice to a strained left-ankle tendon. Creamer's ankle let him down on the fairway on the 16th, his 7th, but, brave soldier that he is, he plugged away manfully. It was no big deal, he suggested. He had had the injury before. Veterans these chaps may be, but they are a hardy bunch.

Basketball: a sport to get your teeth into

SIMON BARNES



On Saturday

World Cup qualifier against mighty Moldova today. As a small compensation, he is thereby able to go on his honeymoon. On Monday, he married Oriana Capona, a 22-year-old student.

Put on ice

Faithful readers will recall the fun that ice hockey fans in the United States had throwing dead octopuses onto the ice as a mark of esteem for the Detroit Red Wings. Now, the National Hockey League has banned the throwing of all animals, living or dead, onto the ice. A sad day for Detroit: sad, too, for Florida Panthers, whose fans like to throw dead rats. However, when a player scores a hat-trick, they may, if they wish, throw their hats.

Dead on line

There are plenty of golfing stories about players who drop dead on the course only

for their companions to continue the game around the corpse. This certainly did not happen in Fife, when Jimmy Hogg, 77, collapsed and died of a heart attack after playing his opening drive. The other golfers in his four, all long-time playing partners, waited until the body was carried away. And then they carried on with the game. "I'm sure Jimmy would have wanted us to," one of them said. "He'd have done the same."

Stark threat

Militant action by football fans has been in the news of late, but the protestations of Brighton supporters seem rather tame when compared with the followers of Athletic Bucharest. On Sunday, the boys were trailing by the little matter of 16-0 and, with two minutes to go, their chances of pulling the game back were looking a little slim. At this, some of the supporters—the newspaper *Evenimentul Zilei* suggested that they were gypsies—announced that if the Athletic players conceded two more goals, they would leave the stadium naked. The team took this threat with some seriousness: so much so that they fled the ground with those two minutes still left to play. For this, the club was fined 50 million lei, or getting on for £10,000, by the Romanian FA.

Second helping

A number of people responded to my pondering last week on whether any modern elite athlete had succeeded in a second sporting career. Ian Henderson suggests John Surtees, who was world champion on motorbikes and then in Formula One. Mike Finlay suggests himself: "I played football for Old Minchen-deniens fifth XI, and have just had my golf handicap reduced from 28 to 26." Hauno Viinika writes more in praise of the multisport athlete: "I knew such a man. He won the javelin gold medal in the 1948 Olympic Games. As he was already 33, he switched to archery. In the 1950 world championships he shared the team gold. Apart from that, he earned a good living as a singer and a film star. His name was Kai Rautavaara."

IN BRIEF

Holders taken to the 19th

REPTON, the holders, went uncomfortably through to the third round of the 34th Graffon Morrisish Tournament, played at the Brancaster and Hunstanton golf courses yesterday. Given a bye to the second round, Repton eventually saw off the challenge of Uppingham. Richard Hodgkinson and Keith Andrews winning the vital match at the 19th.

Last year's runners-up, KCS Wimbledon, starting in the first round, also overcame their first hurdle, defeating Bancroft's, to set up a second-round tie against Dulwich, who beat Bolton.

Millar out

Cycling: David Millar, 19, Britain's most successful amateur rider in Europe this year, has withdrawn from the time-trial at the world championships that begin in Lugano, Switzerland, next week. He is recovering from bronchitis.

Humby retires

Badminton: Allison Humby, the Great Britain No 3, yesterday announced her retirement. Humby, 23, who represented Britain at the Olympic Games and had a world ranking of No 42, is ending a 13-year career.

Tyrrell switch

Motor racing: Tyrrell, the Formula One team, yesterday announced a deal with Ford for next season, bringing their four-year association with Yamaha to an end.

SAILING

Favourable conditions leave leading crews in good spirits

BY EDWARD GORMAN, SAILING CORRESPONDENT

MIKE GOLDING has picked the wind shifts better than anyone else in the past few days and kept his yacht, *Group 4*, sailing at faster angles than most of the others in the BT Global Challenge fleet. He is still leading as the yachts head southwest towards Madeira. "A very happy crew, as we cruise along at the front of the fleet," he reported yesterday. "Surfing along under spinnaker in the sun."

The fleet is continuing to spread out, with Golding now about 170 miles ahead of the backmarker, *Time & Tide*, which was becalmed just north of the Berlenga Island waypoint, off the Portuguese coast. James Hatfield, the *Time & Tide* skipper, reported good-humouredly: "Our wind machine is broken. Spoke to God, he said he would ask Chay [Blyth, the race director]."

Golding, who was first to pass Berlenga on Thursday night, is around 25 miles ahead of *Sinewie* Water, on *Toshiba Wave Warrior*, with Chris Tibbs, on *Concorde*, close behind him, but on a slightly more southerly course. Behind them, Mark Lodge, on *Motorola*, is holding on to fourth place, but has Richard Merrivether, on *Commercial Union*, close on his heels. In the pack there are good scraps between *Nuclear Electric* and *Ocean Rover*—who are sailing about 70 miles behind Golding to the west of the fleet—and *3Com* and *Heath Insured* on the slower eastern edge.

Humphrey Walters, a crew member on *Ocean Rover*, reported: "We have had a wonderful day hassling *Nuclear Electric* and are 100 yards behind them. We have tracked them for over 48 hours. We are getting sick from our support-

ers in the UK, so we have tried to pull up our socks. The boat is performing beautifully."

Life on board has become very civilised. We are now in the full nine-day menu cycle. Breakfast of eggs and potato pancakes with feta cheese and fresh baked bread rolls—terrific, and nothing left over. Supper will be sardines with mashed potato and basil oil, followed by blackcurrant cheesecake, cooked by Paul Stephens and Lyn Guy."

On board *Commercial Union*, there was a similarly upbeat mood. "Life on board is pretty good, and spirits continuing high," the crew reported yesterday. "Hallucinations about spirits of a different kind—and glasses of sangria and cold lager—are prevalent amongst the crew as we pass the holiday destinations of Portugal and Spain."

No doubt in the weeks and months to come, when the crews are tested to the limit, they will look back on these early days as some of the most enjoyable of the race. Yesterday they were roaring along on runs and reaches with up to 20 knots of breeze to power them, and with most of the boats averaging more than ten knots. As one of the senior race officials said: "They've got 20 knots up their chuff and are going like hell, with dolphins all over the place."

The forecast looks good over the weekend, with 15 to 20 knots of north and then north-easterlies propelling them towards the Equator, which is about another 1,200 miles away.

HOCKEY

Crutchley quickly off the mark

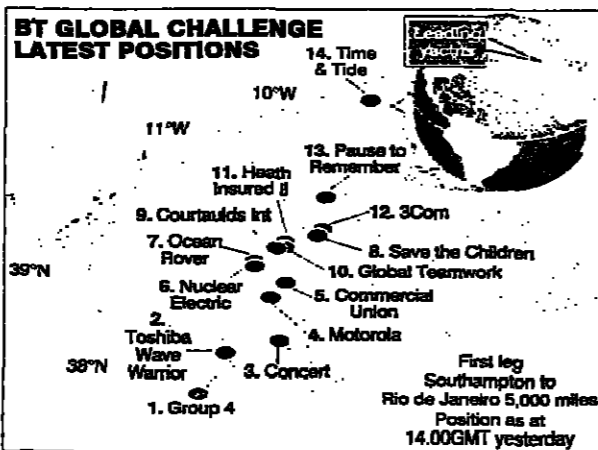
BY SYDNEY FRISKIN

SOUTHGATE and Cannock are prepared for a tight premier division match in the National League tomorrow, each club having opened its campaign with a victory last week. Southgate's attack is unchanged, with Gibbins, Simons and Freeman forming the front-runners and Shaw and Attala in support as inside forwards. Injury will again prevent Soma Singh playing.

Cannock have such depth in talent that they do not seem to miss the four Welsh players still involved in the World Cup qualifying tournament in Italy. Parnham, recently acquired from Stourport, has fitted in well at the back and Crutchley has recovered his scoring touch.

There are no surprises in the Subbition team travelling to East Grinstead, who were pipped at the post last Sunday by Southgate. Subbition had Notton, D'Cruz and Cook in attack at various times while achieving a 4-3 win over Teddington.

East Grinstead continue their dependence on Gibson to get the goals, with Bhatti in his usual role as playmaker. Luke Hodges, from the England Under-21 squad, has left Bournville for Teddington, who will have Coldough back to lead the side against Barford Tigers. Laslett is not available for Teddington but it is hoped Hauck will be fit to play. The high-scoring potential of Barford, however, could put Teddington under pressure.



هكذا من الأصل

RACING 42-44

Helissio heads home
defence of Europe's
premier prize

SPORT

SATURDAY OCTOBER 5 1996

GOLF 46

Montgomerie closes
on top place in
order of merit



Super League becomes a global reality

By CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

IN simple scoring terms, it was victory by 60-1. The Super League yesterday routed the Australian Rugby League (ARL) in the Federal Court in Sydney on every ground for appeal bar one and its long-cherished global vision for the sport will now finally become a reality.

The immediate consequences are a resumption of Anglo-Australian playing relations and a lifting of a ban on an Australasian Super League. An international fixture, probably in Brisbane, is being arranged for next month, at the end of Great Britain's tour of the Pacific and New Zealand. There will be a world club championship in October next year between the top four European and Australasian sides, followed

by a now meaningful World Cup.

The ARL will seek leave to appeal to the Australian High Court against the decision of the three appeal court judges, who overturned every ruling made by Justice James Burchett in his original judgment in favour of the ARL last February. However, the comprehensive nature of the Super League's victory led to mutterings from inside the ARL that it might have neither the stomach, nor the pocket, for a continuation of the 20-month battle to control rugby league.

Without tours to Australia and world play-offs, the European Super League, albeit successfully launched last summer, was hollow and impaired. Now, the prospect of both gives succour to a game that has the *raison d'être* for

the controversial move to summer. Through Rugby League (Europe), the new promotional arm of the 12 Super League clubs, commercial possibilities can now also be tapped to the full. A busy calendar should also prevent another short-term

rush by players into rugby union.

A battle principally over pay-television rights in Australia was one that Maurice Lindsay, the Rugby Football League chief executive, felt throughout would elevate the sport to a new plane. "There

was a dwindling band of us with faith in Super League's ability to win this case," he said. "There is a sense of vindication, but mainly excitement now that we'll have a global competition, with the best players in the world on the biggest stages."

For now, Australia has two national teams; the ARL version plays tomorrow in Papua New Guinea. The country will also have two competitions in 1997, unless there is a move by the 12 ARL clubs to join the ten-team Super League, which will start next February. If the worries expressed by some loyalists turn into a revolt, then the ARL will be hopelessly isolated, although all stood firm at a meeting last night.

In upholding 60 grounds for appeal, the judges found that loyalty agreements binding clubs to the ARL breached

trade practices and that the rights of players and clubs were unfairly affected by previous court orders. The one ruling against the Super League's backers, News Ltd, the Australian arm of The News Corporation, the parent company of The Times, was that it should pay damages for interference to the ARL competition.

There is no doubting the tenacity of the now impoverished ARL in fighting what it sees as a takeover of its game and, as the most popular television and spectator sport in New South Wales and Queensland, a rich market. Super League matches in Australia and New Zealand will be shown on Foxtel, a pay-television channel 50 per cent owned by News Ltd. There was no word yesterday from Kerry Packer, whose Channel

9 station has bankrolled the ARL.

The fact that only three Super League clubs, Canberra, Cronulla and Brisbane, made the top-eight final series in the recent Australian Premiership, appears to back the argument by Ken Arthurson, the ARL chairman, that his organisation possesses the better players, though it is not totally convincing. In ruling out any compromise, Arthurson said he was convinced there would be two competitions next season.

For Great Britain, who met Fiji in the early hours today, the restoration of Australia to their tour itinerary represents an eagerly-awaited climax. For Australian players of the calibre of Steve Renouf, Bradley Clyde and Laurie Daley, it will be a welcome return to the international arena.



Arthurson: defiant
in defeat for ARL

TIMETABLE OF VICTORY

MARCH 1995: Pay-television dispute erupts in Australia with plans for a so-called Star League (later to become Super League) Mass defections by players from the establishment Australian Rugby League (ARL).

FEBRUARY 1996: Six days before Australian Super League is due to start, it is ruled illegal by Mr Justice Burchett in the Sydney Federal Court and banned until 2000 in an overwhelming legal victory for the ARL.

APRIL 1995: English clubs accept a five-year £87 million offer by The News Corporation to set up summer European Super League. Proposals for merged clubs abandoned. ARL buys up Jason Robinson and Gary Connolly, of Wigan, in bidding war with Super League.

OCTOBER 1995: Australia snub Super League players and win the centenary World Cup in Britain with a side comprising only ARL players. Formation of Super League International Board leaves ARL isolated.

Wales pin hopes on Dutch discord

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

AN ABIDING memory of the European football championship was of England's 4-1 defeat of Holland. The Dutch were not only mastered but destroyed, a result that, even four months on, they find difficult to accept or comprehend. Tonight, when they open their 1998 World Cup campaign with a qualifying tie against Wales in Cardiff, they will attempt to exorcise the demons that still lurk within.

Nobody is foolish enough to admit as much, at least publicly. Victory over Wales, the group seven leaders, could hardly be deemed revenge for a humiliation on English soil. What Holland seek is a reaffirmation of their self-belief, a confidence verging on arrogance that they remain a force on the European stage.

It is a test, too, of team morale, which was partially lifted by a 2-2 draw against Brazil in Amsterdam in August. Has Guus Hiddink, the Holland coach, managed to

out 13 other players, including Dennis Bergkamp, the Arsenal striker, Patrick Kluitert, Peter Hoekstra and Richard Witschge.

With Bergkamp's hamstring injury failing to respond to treatment, Hiddink did not dare risk him — much to Arsenal's relief, no doubt. "They need not have worried," Hiddink said. "We have good medical staff and they have kept in close contact with Highbury. Arsenal did not put us under any pressure."

All week, Bobby Gould, the Wales manager, has been stoking up his players, hyping them into a state of simmering self-assurance. He believes that the two victories against San Marino — 11 goals scored, none conceded — can be accompanied by a third, more notable scalp: that even without Ryan Giggs, who is suspended, the task is not beyond them.

He has demanded passion and aggression, but bristled when a Dutch television crew suggested that he might employ kick-and-rush tactics. "I take great offence to that," he said. He does, though, hope that the 4-1 horrors return to haunt Holland. "Memories like that don't disappear too quickly," he said. "I think it's going to be tough for them."

Of the probable Dutch lineup, six started at Wembley. Jordi Cruyff shudders at the thought of another defeat. "It would be disastrous," he said. "It would give Wales nine points and us zero." He paused. "I don't want to even think about it."

Wales (4-4-2): M. Southall (Everton); M. Bowen (West Ham United), A. Meville (Sunderland), K. Symons (Manchester City), M. Pennington (Sheff Wednesd); J. Robinson (Charlton Athletic), B. Brown (Sheff Wednesd), G. Hogg (Birmingham City), G. Speed (Derby), M. Hughes (Sheff Wednesd), D. Saunders (Nottingham Forest). Substitutes to be announced.

HOLLAND (4-4-2, probable): E. van der Sar (Ajax) — F. Veldorp (Middlesbrough), F. de Boer (Ajax), S. Vastbinder (PSV Eindhoven), W. Bos (PSV Eindhoven), P. Cocu (PSV Eindhoven), C. Seedorf (Real Madrid) — J. Cruyff (Manchester United), R. de Boer (Ajax). Substitutes to be announced.

Rob Hughes, page 42
Wales likely lads, page 42
Scotland depleted, page 42

GROUP SEVEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wales	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Belgium	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Holland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkey	1	0	0	1	2	0	0
San Marino	2	0	0	0	1	11	0

RESULTS: San Marino 0 Wales 5, Wales 6 San Marino 0, Belgium 2 Turkey 1

restore harmony among a group of players that appears to have inherited many of the egotistical qualities of its illustrious predecessors?

During Euro 96, Hiddink sent home Edgar Davids, the midfielder player, for criticising his team selections. Rumours of racial conflict in the multicultural squad were rife, too. "We cannot deny the past," Hiddink said yesterday. "We have talked a lot about Euro 96, about what went on, and everybody is aware of it. The spirit before, during and after the Brazil game was good, and it is good now. Everyone knows their obligations, my expectations."

Perhaps it has helped that Davids is not with the party. He has been unable to gain a regular place in Milan's Serie A side. Hiddink is also with-



Rusedski, left, acknowledges the crowd after his quarter-final victory over Olhovskiy, while Henman's determination is evident after his success

Britons' advance continues apace

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

THE upsurge in British tennis fortunes continued yesterday with Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski reaching the semi-finals of ATP Tour tournaments in Lyons and Singapore respectively.

Henman defeated Karol Kučera, of Slovakia, 7-6, 6-2, to set up a repeat of his meeting at Wimbledon with Yevgeny Kafelnikov, which the British No 1 won. The Russian secured his place in the last four in Lyons with victory over the No 2 seed, Magnus Gustafsson.

After being kept on court for 2½ hours before beating the Dutchman, Jan Siemerink, in the second round late on Thursday, Henman eased through despite playing in discomfort from blisters. Once he had shaded a first-set tie-break 8-6, the result was not in doubt as Henman secured the second set.

Rusedski built his 7-6, 6-2 win against Andrei Olhovskiy, of Russia, in the Singapore Open on the foundations laid by his renowned service power. Rusedski, who is unseeded, struck 16 aces, including three in succession to close out the match. "My tennis has been there, but I am more relaxed now and I am not letting my mind wander," Rusedski said.

Clubs unveil European vision

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

THE leading clubs in European rugby union yesterday agreed a formula for a competition next season that they will put out to tender to broadcasters. It is not yet clear whether they intend to operate within the auspices of the game's traditional governing bodies.

Clubs from England, Wales, France and Italy, meeting at Heathrow, proclaimed an agreed "European-wide structure of club league and cup competitions" — from which Scotland and Ireland are noticeable by their absence. "Talks... were the result of a desire by professional rugby union clubs to establish a stable and viable platform for the game in the northern hemisphere."

It is hard not to see this proposition as putting the cart before the horse. The clubs have to establish whether they are working as partners with, or in opposition to, their respective unions, which, in England and Wales, they have

yet to do. French clubs, meanwhile, have reached such an agreement and will not participate in a competition unauthorised by their federation.

If the club plan proves acceptable to any broadcaster, and the International Rugby Football Board (IRFB) has guidelines that channel such agreements through national unions, then it will cut directly across the existing two-tier knockout tournament organised by European Rugby Cup Limited (ERC), which begins next Saturday.

As a sweetener to television interests, which may see in this level of club rugby easier access to international rugby, the clubs have agreed to release their players for eight internationals in any season "on a basis to be agreed with the unions".

That, at least, offers some hope of an area for co-operation, though Wales, for example, plan to play ten internationals this season

alone. There is no suggestion that the clubs would release players for district rugby in Scotland and Ireland, or for the representative tier planned by the Rugby Football Union, which will pit, say, the Northern Counties against the All Blacks and Argentina over the next two months.

"Today was an important step forward for the creation of

Wales prepare 45
Orrell anxiety 45

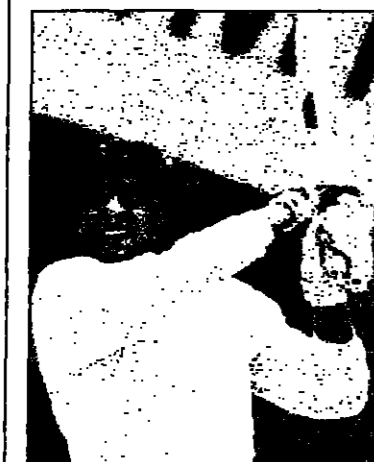
a properly organised and securely funded European-wide professional club rugby union structure," the clubs' statement claimed, although they have yet to produce evidence of the secure funding that is critical to their aims.

Tom Kiernan, chairman of ERC, doubts that the aims of the clubs replicate those of the unions. "That may be true for some of them but not for those

clubs who have turned themselves into business houses," he said in Rome, where the IRFB general meeting is in session. Marcel Martin, Kiernan's colleague from France, has offered details of the agreement reached between the French clubs and their governing body as a model to Donald Kerr, chairman of the English Professional Rugby Union Clubs, though he has yet to receive an acknowledgement.

Meanwhile, Vernon Pugh, the IRFB chairman, has emphasised to the 61 countries attending the board's third general meeting that professionalisation should not be allowed to divide the game.

"We must not let present-day problems overtake our longer-term objectives," Pugh said in Rome. "The IRFB is your governing body. Its authority has to be accepted by all: unions, clubs, provinces and other rugby bodies whether great or small, strong or weak."



Afridi: 11 sixes in teenage blitz

Pakistan prodigy shatters one-day record

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

SHAHID AFRIDI, of Pakistan, who is thought to be only 16, scored a century from 37 balls, a record in international one-day cricket, in the match against Sri Lanka in the Kenya four-nations tournament in Nairobi yesterday.

His age may be in dispute — one report says he is 18 — but there was no disputing the way he rewrote the record books in what was only his second appearance on the international stage. He hit 11 sixes and six fours before falling for 102. "It looked more like baseball than cricket," one spectator said.

Shahid, who was pulled out of the Pakistan youth side to replace the injured Mushtaq Ahmed, missed the fastest one-day international 50 by one ball, but smashed the previous record for a century by 11 deliveries. Both records were held by the Sri Lanka opener, Sanath Jayasuriya, who made 50 from 17 balls and 100 from 48 against Pakistan in a tournament in Singapore last April. Yesterday, Afridi had the satisfaction of hammering Jayasuriya out of the attack by taking 43 off the left-arm spinner's two overs, including five sixes.

The Pakistan manager, Nusrat Aziz, said he had asked for a slow

bowler to replace Mushtaq and was unaware that Afridi was also a batsman. "I didn't come here to slog," Afridi said. "My main job is to be a spinner. I just wanted to be useful to the team."

Inspired by their latest prodigy, Pakistan made 371 for nine in their 50 overs. Afridi, who went in at 60 for one, shared a second-wicket partnership of 126 with his captain, Saeed Anwar, who scored 115.

Despite an innings of 122 from Aravinda de Silva, Pakistan bowled out their opponents for 289 to qualify for the final against South Africa tomorrow. But it was a close-run thing. Had Sri Lanka made one

more run they would have qualified by virtue of a superior run-rate.

It looked as though Sri Lanka would just make it when, in the final over, Chaminda Vaas hit a huge six off Waqar Younis followed by a four. But the fast bowler made the last word, bowling Vaas for 16 with the penultimate ball of the match to finish with figures of five for 52.

It was a good win win for Pakistan over the World Cup-holders for they were also without Wasim Akram, who has returned home to be with his sick father.

The match aggregate of 660 runs was another record.

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Najibullah had hours to save himself from killers



Christopher Thomas finds Kabul still shocked by the summary death of a former leader

A SCRAWLED message has appeared on the concrete post from which the former President, Muhammad Najibullah, was left dangling in the centre of Kabul last week. "Let this be a warning," the garden hose used for the hanging is still there, drawing a steady stream of people who stare in shocked silence.

Kabul observed its first full day of Friday worship under Taliban rule yesterday, still stunned by an event that has fuelled fears about the kind of people who are now master of three-quarters of Afghanistan. There was ample reason to hate Najibullah, once a secret police chief, but no one wanted this. He had spent four and a half years sheltering in a United Nations compound, a short walk from the presidential palace where he ruled for six years before being toppled by the invading Mujahidin in April 1992.

In the frantic hours before being killed, he was either naive or so paralysed by fear to try to save himself. He was killed with his younger brother, Ahmadzai, who had stayed with him. They slept by day, and by night they smoked, watched television, played cards and read. They feared being killed by snipers if they ventured in daylight into the compound's small walled garden.

There was a small swimming pool, which they used after dark. They installed punchbags and weightlifting equipment: both were in peak physical condition. A burly Najibullah, 6ft 2in and known as The Ox, lost 12½ stone and was almost unrecognisable from his presidential days. Every week or two he spoke by UN satellite phone to his wife, Fatana, and three daughters in Delhi, where they are guests of India's Government.

One day a year he donned a navy blue suit and tie and celebrated a formal birthday dinner for both of them. Their birthdays are a few days apart: they had always celebrated them jointly. A cake was baked for his last birthday, his fiftieth.

The former President, in effect installed as leader by the Soviet Union, was enthralled by *The Great Game* by Peter Hopkirk, a former journalist with *The Times*, and was translating it into Farsi. He had hoped to have it printed and said all Afghans should read it to understand more of their history and draw lessons from it. He had one or two chapters left to translate.

Burhanuddin Rabbani, ousted as President nine days ago by Taliban, offered to take Najibullah with him when he fled north. Najibullah, not trusting him, refused. He seemed to think he was safer with the invaders, or perhaps he had come to fear the world beyond the gate.

At about 6pm his government guards fled. For hours, he and his brother could have walked out of the gate. A quarter of a million Kabul citizens were fleeing: there was chaos and the pair could have tried to lose themselves in it. Instead, they decided to stay.

‘A quarter of a million fled: the brothers could have disappeared in the chaos’

Taliban soldiers came at 1.30am last Friday and took Najibullah to the Presidential Palace, leaving his brother behind.

One account of what happened next is that Najibullah put up a fight, seized a Kalashnikov and was shot in the head and body. There is no doubt, according to a doctor, that he was dead when strung up. Before dying he had demanded the right to make a last public statement. He wanted journalists and a crowd of 1,000 to hear him. Having refused interviews during his incarceration, he was desperate to say something.

His brother, who had been talking frantically over a UN walkie-talkie seeking help, was driven by five gunmen to the palace. It was now 4.30am. From there he was taken alive with Najibullah to a nearby roundabout and hanged. The bodies stayed suspended for two days. Najibullah's family was given safe passage by Taliban to Gardez, the family ancestral home south of Kabul, for last Monday's funeral.



A Jewish woman weeps as an Israeli police officer carries a baby to safety after the Wailing Wall area was evacuated

Appeals for calm outweigh call to arms by Hamas

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

ISRAELIS and Palestinians pulled back temporarily from the brink of war yesterday as attempts by Islamic militants to incite "total confrontation" between Jews and Arabs after Friday prayers at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque and elsewhere in the West Bank and Gaza Strip failed.

As both sides appealed for calm before tomorrow's American-sponsored peace negotiations on the Israel-Gaza border, Muslim clerics restrained stone-throwers and Israel softened its security dragnet on the 2.2 million Palestinians under its control. Palestinian police, reacting to orders from Yasser Arafat, the President of the Palestinian Authority, worked to prevent new confrontations. As one east Jerusalem shopkeeper said, with an enigmatic smile: "For a few days at least, we are prepared to give peace a chance."

Although a handful of the 12,000 worshippers who managed to reach al-Aqsa threw stones on to hundreds of Jews praying at the Wailing Wall,

Israeli riot police refrained from storming the Temple Mount.

Al-Aqsa prayer leader Muhammad Hussein shouted through a loudspeaker as the stones began to fly: "We do not want to give the aggressors a chance to close the mosque. Please go home quietly."

Jewish worshippers fled from the Wall after evacuation orders were shouted by police, whose restraint had been specifically ordered from above.

Earlier, Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, made an unprecedented appeal to Palestinians for calm over Israel's Arabic TV and radio channels. "I ask you, do not go into mourning. Do not lose hope. This is an opportunity for a fresh start for the peace process."

Shamir 80, the former Israeli Prime Minister, collapsed in Paris yesterday at a fundraising meeting. Israel Army Radio said. He was treated for exhaustion and high blood pressure. (AP)



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Member states hide behind British opposition as Chirac pushes for progress on Maastricht II

EU leaders target Major at start of treaty review

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN DUBLIN
AND RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

JOHN MAJOR will offer a convenient target today when European Union leaders meet in Dublin to give impetus to the virtually stagnant negotiations to revamp the Maastricht treaty. British resistance will not, however, drown out the increasing discord among the other states over the design of a new Europe.

The looming British election is being blamed for the way in which almost all the member states are holding back from serious negotiation at the Dublin inter-governmental conference (IGC).

The Prime Minister will take a stand against attempts by a strong EU majority to insert an "employment chapter" into the treaty. The proposal, developed by the

Union's Irish presidency as a balance to the treaty's commitment to monetary rigour, would seek to commit member states to creating and safeguarding jobs. Britain insists that the matter is up to member states, and Germany shares its qualms.

The leaders of Austria, The Netherlands and Portugal signalled their distaste for the Conservative administration this week when they took the unusual step of sending messages of support to Tony Blair at the Labour conference, despite the party's lukewarm stance on Europe. With the Tory conference only three days away, Mr Major will repeat his opposition to virtually all the reform proposals on the table, particularly a

draft "economic chapter" that has been approved by 12 of the 15 member states.

There is widespread agreement, however, that Britain's opposition to any extension of EU powers is being used by other states to disguise their own misgivings about ceding sovereignty. In a glaring illustration of the prevailing mutual suspicions, Irish officials said yesterday that only Den-

mark and Austria had responded to a questionnaire last month in which all states were asked to what extent they were prepared to discard the national veto in favour of majority voting in EU decision-making. France and Germany, the motor of the Union and the core countries of the proposed single currency, refused to respond, despite noble statements about the

need for more majority voting. The episode has fuelled concern that today's gathering will end with a minimal brush-up of the kind desired by the British Government rather than the ambitious framework desired by the federal-minded states.

The aim of the summit is to kickstart the IGC exercise in time for a formal gathering in Dublin in December and conclusion of a Maastricht II treaty in Amsterdam next June. John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister and President of the EU Council, wants a commitment to finish the new treaty in June and an agreement not to lower ambitions for the outcome.

He also hopes the leaders will focus on ways of enabling the EU to fight drugs and crime, create jobs, run a coherent foreign policy and reshape its institutions for the entry of up to a dozen new members from Central and Eastern Europe.

President Chirac is eager to draw up the new EU treaty so that it can be ratified well before the French general elections in March 1998. He and Professor Romano Prodi, the Italian Prime Minister, set off for Dublin yesterday saying they had smoothed over their differences and would take a joint approach on issues ranging from the Middle East to monetary union.

Signor Prodi said after a summit in Naples with M Chirac that there was a "perfect understanding" between them

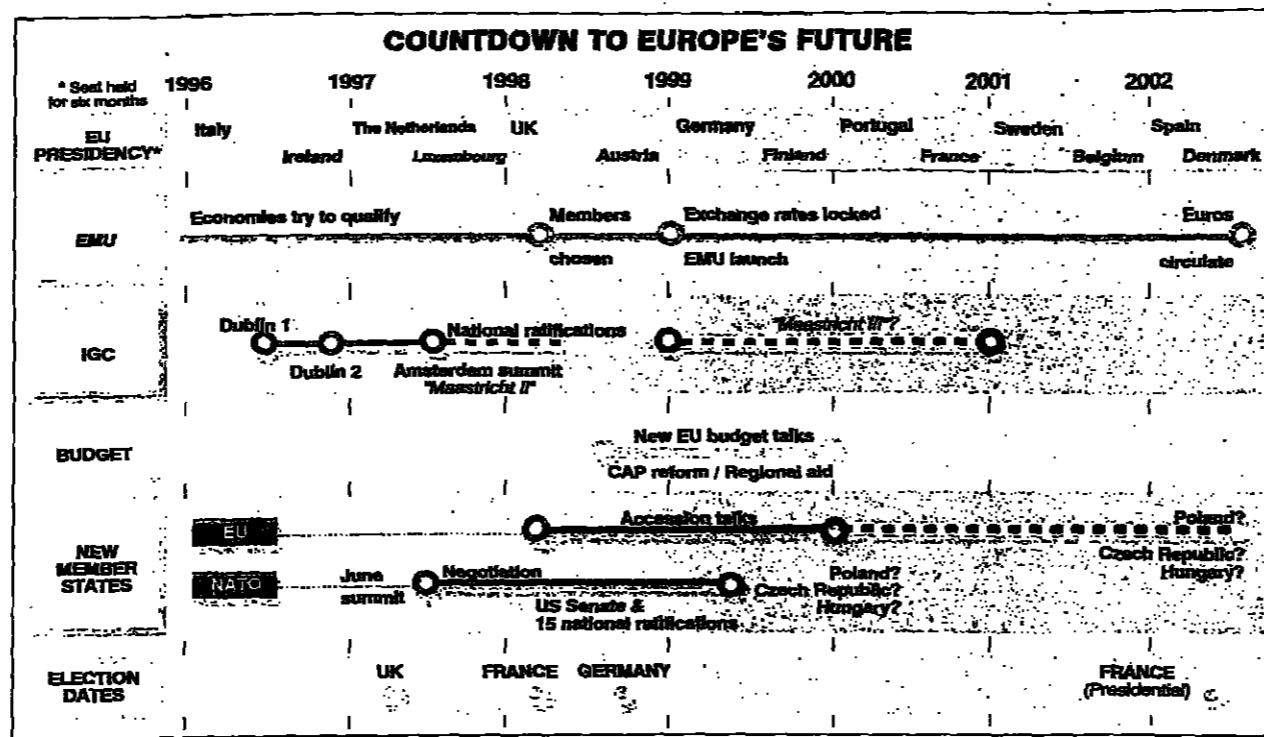
on all issues, including the vexed question of whether Italy's efforts to qualify for monetary union were sufficient in 1999. M Chirac, who had chosen not to utter parts of his earlier speeches in Naples that praised Italy's new policy, said at the end of the summit that Rome's rigour was a "courageous policy in line with the European spirit". He added: "The subsequent rise in the lira and fall in interest rates can only be appreciated."

Signor Prodi was also conciliatory, withdrawing remarks that he made earlier this week about French budgetary "window-dressing".

John Major, page 20
Leading article
and Letters, page 21



John Major, who is likely to oppose any "employment chapter", and John Bruton, host of the Dublin talks



Paris and Bonn pencil in a date with destiny

BY GEORGE BROCK, EUROPEAN EDITOR

WHEN President Chirac arrives in Dublin today, he will be keen to shake the inter-governmental conference on the Maastricht treaty out of the torpor and obscurity into which the French leader thinks it has fallen.

The summiters will hear a lot of vigorous, galvanising language from the President, who intends to lecture his fellow leaders about the need for clarity and concentration.

A look at Europe's crowded calendar for the rest of the century explains why M Chirac is in so much of a hurry: 1998 is so packed with decisions, elections and elections that it will become either the EU's *annus mirabilis* or *annus horribilis*, and M Chirac and Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, are busy trying to work out ways of successfully stage-managing 1998 and 1999.

President Chirac does not want his compatriots still bickering over the rights and wrongs of Maastricht II in the months before the French general election of March 1998. So he will be urging the summit to hurry up.

Ever since the architects of European integration have harboured designs on the sensitive political subjects of frontiers, crime, armies and currencies, voters have been dropping spanners in the works and ruining carefully-

crafted timetables. The comprehensive reorganisation of political Europe will be punctuated by elections. M Chirac is upset because most of his European partners want to delay the end of the treaty conference until at least next June, in the hope that a Labour government in Britain will be more accommodating than John Major. Herr Kohl, holding a steady and commanding poll leg in Germany, works hard to ensure that his opponents find no electoral opportunity to exploit the fears which ordinary Germans have about the single currency.

As the timetable stands now, Germany's federal election falls between the EU summit (sometime in the spring of 1998) which will choose the members of the single currency and January 1, 1999, the date for the launch of monetary union. The summit in the spring of 1998 will be chaired by the British Prime Minister. That prospect has helped to persuade the German Cabinet to consider a six-month delay for the start of EMU. The critical summit would then be chaired by Austria, more sympathetic to Germany.

Enlarging the EU depends on its existing members agreeing revolutionary change to the subsidy regimes for regional aid and the common agricultural policy. The EU has no history of making such huge changes rapidly.

Enlarging Nato depends on all 16 parliaments in the present allied countries ratifying a new Nato treaty — and on Russia agreeing to tolerate an American-led alliance creeping eastward.

The target date for the entry of the first lucky few Central European states to squeeze inside is April 4, 1999 — exactly half a century after Nato's founding treaty came into force. That is an attractive incentive to a leading country such as Poland. But for countries such as Bulgaria, Romania and the Baltic republics, the wait will be much longer.

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مكتبة من الاصل

Surgeon who saved Pope's life after assassination attempt prepares for appendix operation

Keyhole star of heaven's gate

WHEN the Pope enters hospital tomorrow for his sixth operation in his 18 years as pontiff, he will be in experienced hands. Professor Francesco Crucitti, the surgeon who saved the Pope's life after the assassination attempt, has operated on the Pope three times before.

With the pontiff older and more frail, there is a lingering mystery over what is really wrong with him. In May 1981, Professor Crucitti, who heads the Institute for Clinical Surgery at the Catholic University Polyclinic, performed a six-hour operation which saved the Pope's life after the assassination attempt by a Turkish gunman in St Peter's Square. Three months later he had to operate again when the pontiff developed an infection.

In July 1992, Professor Crucitti removed a tumour from the Pope's colon. He admitted the tumour was "on the verge of becoming malignant". Some Vatican sources believe the pontiff's present troubles can be traced to the attempt on his life, when he was shot

VATICAN FILE

by RICHARD OWEN



in the abdomen, and the subsequent complications.

This time the Pope, 76, is undergoing an appendectomy. Last month the Vatican admitted, after months of obfuscation, that his repeated bouts of illness since last Christmas were the result of "chronic inflammation of the appendix".

This was greeted with scepticism, and many suspect that Professor Crucitti, a specialist in laparoscopy, or keyhole surgery, may take the opportunity to see if the Pope is suffering from something worse, such as the recurrence of a "near-malignant" growth. Asked why Professor Crucitti

and other Vatican doctors had maintained for so long that the Pope's illness was due to "influenza with digestive fevers", he replied candidly: "If I had said it was something that needed surgical treatment, I would have caused uproar. We managed to tame the inflammation with drugs, but now I have to operate."

Professor Crucitti said the trembling in the Pope's hand, attributed by some to Parkinson's disease, was neurological — "which is beyond my competence". The Pope's general condition was good, he said, but would be better if the pontiff did not insist on a punishing travel schedule.

The professor's aim is to have the Pope back on his feet for the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination on November 1. A special eight-room papal suite has been prepared on the tenth floor of the Gemelli hospital in Rome, with a private lift, and bullet-proof windows and doors. The suite includes a Lady chapel, a kitchen, and accommodation for the Pope's entourage and medical team, including his personal doctor, Renato Buzzonetti.

Professor Crucitti has made sure that the Pope's bed will have a view of the dome of St Peter's. But the pontiff's favourite nurse, Sister Ausilia, died of cancer this summer, and will be replaced by Sister Franca, another nun from the same order and a regular member of the professor's nursing team.



Professor Francesco Crucitti, who will operate on the pontiff

Doorstep call to faith for 'pagan' city

ONE of the Pope's last acts before entering hospital was to endorse a campaign by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the Vicar of Rome and head of the Italian Bishops' Conference, to bring Christian belief back to an increasingly pagan Italian capital.

With the millennium on the horizon, Mgr Ruini wants to reinvigorate faith in the city, which is expecting 40 million pilgrims from around the world for 2000.

Cardinal Ruini's aim is "to halt the inexorable advance of de-Christianisation in the Pope's own diocese," *La Repubblica* said. Only 23 per cent of Rome's population of nearly three million regularly attend Mass on Sunday and a mere 12 per cent say that they go to confession once a month. Seventy per cent of Romans say that they are in favour of divorce, gay marital sex, birth control and abortion.

The cardinal says that even though Rome "is wrapped in the history of Christianity", it is not immune from the "worldwide phenomenon" of loss of religious values. He plans to distribute a million free copies of St Mark's Gospel to families in Rome over the next three years, and to hold public debates at which leading cardinals will answer questions. Each Rome parish is being asked to form "patrols" of 20 to 30 missionaries "to carry the word of God from door to door".

Lining up bones of contention

VATICAN millennium preparations have earthly as well as spiritual goals, with plans to construct an underground railway running beneath the Tiber to link St Peter's with the Colosseum and the heart of Rome. British firms involved in the Channel Tunnel construction are said to be ready to

help Italian engineers to overcome the obstacles. The tunnel route passes so many archaeological sites that engineers have to call a halt each time a bore hole reveals another ancient cemetery or building. "The Tiber is turning red with the blood of bureaucratic battles," *L'Espresso* said.

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CHANGING TIMES

Nun keeps secret of Fátima for 79 years

BY TUNKU VARADARAJAN

THE sole survivor of three Portuguese shepherd children who claimed in 1917 to have seen a vision of the Virgin Mary at Fátima — now one of the most important centres of pilgrimage in the Roman Catholic world — has just completed 50 years of monastic life at a Carmelite convent in Coimbra.

Sister Lucia, now nearly 90, was tending her family's sheep 79 years ago when, according to her testimony, "a Lady brighter than the sun" appeared before her and two young cousins. The children were to see the vision six times in all.

The affair was deeply controversial at the time, with the anti-clerical Republican Government accusing the Church of "fabricating a miracle" to boost its influence. The children were arrested and put under pressure to admit to a hoax, but they stood fast under interrogation and were subsequently released, after which they said they saw the Virgin was the last time. Up to 70,000 people converged on Fátima that day — October 13, 1917 — although only the three children saw her.

On that occasion, 10-year-old Lucia was entrusted by the Virgin with three prophecies, which came to be referred to as the "secrets of Fátima". The first two, which predicted the Bolshevik Revolution ("Rus-

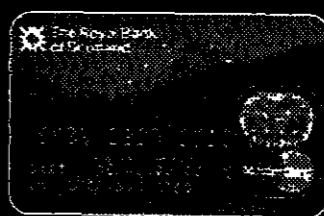
sia will spread her errors through the world, causing wars and persecution against the Church") and the Second World War, have always been known. The third is still a secret, and often the subject of fearful speculation among the faithful.

The two cousins, Francisco and Jacinta, died of influenza shortly after the vision. Lucia, deeply affected by her spiritual experience and the death of her cousins, was drawn to the Church, completing her novitiate in 1926. After spending a few years of study in Spain, she joined the Sordano convent in Portugal, where she remained until 1946, the year that she entered the ascetic Carmelite order.

In 1957, Sister Lucia wrote down the contents of the "third secret", entrusting the envelope to Pope Pius XII. On her instructions, the contents must not be revealed until after her death. In 1981, a former Trappist monk hijacked an Aer Lingus jet and threatened to blow it up if the Pope did not immediately reveal the "third prophecy". The hijacker, however, was subdued, and the jet remained safe.

When the Pope was shot in an assassination attempt in May that year, many believers were convinced that that event was the one prophesied at Fátima.

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OPINION
Too little, too late? Lord Gowrie's protests about shrinking subsidy are years behind the times



INTERVIEW
Fêted in Paris, Yasmina Reza bursts on to the London scene next week with her droll comedy, *Art*

THE TIMES ARTS



GOING OUT
From Meg Ryan going to war in the Gulf for her new film, *Courage Under Fire*...



GOING OUT
... to Jessye Norman in recital at the Festival Hall: the top events are in Weekend, page 16

For months the dread word "lottery" has not crossed these few centimetres that I call home. I have surprised even myself with my Trappist abstinence. But frankly, what's the point of banging on? Those with the power to institute change clearly prefer to sit tight in their little quangoes, rather than face the mess outside.

Consider the great flaw in lottery funding: the bizarre rule that allowed the lottery to bankroll gleaming new culture palaces but prevented it from saving good performing companies from going bust. Readers may recall that this law was pointed out, here and elsewhere, years ago. If Lord Gowrie, the Arts Council's chairman, disputes this, let him dispatch his chauffeur to inspect the annals of *The Times* (although, knowing the Arts Council, I expect it has an entire department devoted to annals inspection).

But the Arts Council did nothing when the lottery rules were being drawn up. The reason? Pure greed.

Welcome to 'the people's priorities'

It wanted its cake and its icing too. It expected the Treasury "honourably" to maintain the arts subsidy even when vast sums were flowing from the lottery.

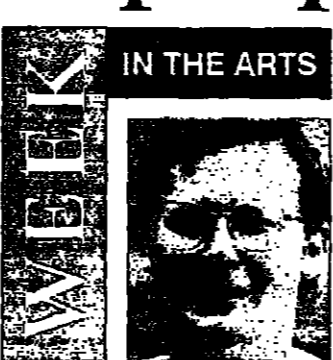
Unbelievably naive? Those are not words that spring to mind about Gowrie. But I fear that m'lud was a trifle vain. When he took up the Arts Council job, replacing the incurably inert Lord Palumbo, he really did believe that, as a former Tory minister, he could pull strings. The Treasury might be persuaded to increase the grant, he told me at the time, because the arts subsidy was too small to have a "macro-economic implication". I didn't have a clue what he meant, but it sounded jolly convincing.

Alas, he has been betrayed by his old buddies. Macro-betrayed. The subsidy has been cut, viciously. And the Treasury has pointed

out, as everybody (except the Arts Council) knew it would, that the lottery has more than doubled the amount the Arts Council has to play with, so what's the problem? The problem, of course, is that the Arts Council is stymied by the daft rules it helped to formulate.

Its response to this crisis? It arrived in two parts, both useless. First came last month's "stabilisation fund". This does indeed change the rules to allow lottery funds to prop up arts organisations in dire straits. But it is so tiny in scope as to be pointless.

Second came Lord Gowrie's hopelessly belated verbal attack on the Government this week, accompanying an Arts Council annual report that offers more of the same. For a man who told *The Times* in May 1994 that the arts world was full of "subsidy junkies", Gowrie is curiously indignant now about the



IN THE ARTS
RICHARD MORRISON
"£17 million in real terms" that has been lopped off the Arts Council budget in the intervening years. Rather than offering the Treasury lessons in "macro-economic implications", however, he now

argues on an altogether more spiritual plane. "Only perhaps the Sovereign carries as much moral weight beyond these shores as our artists," he tells us.

I have read this extraordinary sentence many times, and still have no idea what it means. How much "moral weight" does Liam Gallagher carry beyond these shores? And if luvvies get more handouts from the taxpayers, does this give them more "moral weight", or less?

The Arts Council report also recruits Sir Cameron Mackintosh to write an article titled *No public subsidy, no West End*. In other words, undermine the subsidised theatres that nurture talent, and you jeopardise a hugely successful industry. That's a more promising line of argument. The weakness in it is

that if the arts are so damn successful, why do they need subsidy? Well, you and I and Lord Gowrie know the answer to that. But to the averagely dense Tory or Labour MP the subtle reasoning is not so easy to follow.

Besides, whatever goodwill there was in political circles towards the arts largely evaporated after those huge lottery handouts. That was ominously clear from Tony Blair's speech this week, when the PM-in-waiting questioned whether the lottery money had, in fact, all gone to good causes. "We want to fund specific environment, education and public health priorities through the proceeds of the lottery," he said. "I want the people's money to go on the people's priorities."

Gosh, if I were an arts administrator that sentence would scare me stiff. The people's priorities?

Whatever that airy tosh means, I fear that opera-house extensions don't feature highly. The message is: "The bonanza is over, chaps — and if you have squandered it, tough luck."

It's good to hear something from Labour on the subject of culture. Stephen Dorrell's invisible-man act when he was Heritage Secretary seems, in retrospect, like a whirlwind of innovation when compared with Jack Cunningham's performance so far as Shadow Heritage Secretary.

But the grim truth is that Labour will probably not reverse the arts subsidy cuts. What's more, it will divert lottery money away from the arts as well. No wonder Gowrie is desperate. It's hard to imagine this patrician aesthete leading the Arts Council into an era where "the people's priorities" come first. Is there some university that offers crash courses in Baywatch, Benidorm and take-away biryani? Probably. If so, could it find a place for a bemused peer of the realm?

Three men and a lady

Yasmina Reza's play *Art* was a succès fou in Paris, running for an unprecedented 18 months and picking up two Molière awards. Some 30 productions are currently playing on the Continent. Yet she is nervous about British audience reactions when it opens in the West End in two weeks' time because, she says, "the English are such an idiosyncratic race".

We meet at a hotel in St Germain, around the corner from where 37-year-old Reza lives with film director Didier Martiny and their two young children. Dressed in skintight suede trousers and modish curly black jacket, Reza is not your stereotypical writer, aloof from the vagaries of fashion trends. "I love clothes," she says. "When I was photographed by English and German *Vogue*, it amused me to play the glamour card. After all, real life is part frivolous and part serious, full of contradictions. A person can think about laxatives at the same time as listening to Schoenberg."

This is the kind of ambiguity that informs her writing. Matthew Warchus, who is directing *Art* here, compares her to Samuel Beckett in that she takes a simple idea and uses it as a vehicle to say something profound — camouflaging it under the cover of comedy. "Yasmina turns a shrewd eye on the human condition," he says.

Translated by Christopher Hampton, *Art* is fiercely funny about three men, Serge (Tom Courtenay), Marc (Albert Finney) and Yvan (Ken Stott), who have

June Ducas talks to French writer
Yasmina Reza as her play *Art* arrives in London with a star cast

been the best of buddies for 15 years. When Serge buys a modern painting, a blank white canvas — arguably with tinges of grey lines — for £20,000, he throws their friendship into disarray, unleashing intense and hitherto unexpressed sentiments.

Apprehensive she may be, but Reza is not overawed by the starry cast. She says that if she had not considered them suitable, she would have vetoed them from the start. And having watched the initial rehearsals, she is impressed with their interpretation of the roles.

Art is Reza's third play, and took shape after two leading French actors asked her to write a piece for them. "I couldn't think of a subject," she says. "Then one day a friend of mine bought a Martin Barre, a contemporary artist whose pictures hang in the Pompidou and who is well-known in arty circles here. I thought that the price of £200,000 was ridiculous. But the concept fired my imagination."

How does she manage to capture the psyche of three distinct males?

"Men are mysterious creatures," she says. "It fascinated me to write about them and to try to understand what makes them tick. Although I hate to generalise, men take themselves more seriously than women — possibly a sign of immaturity. Unlike a woman, it is acceptable for men to swear, to be coarse or insult each other. Their vocabulary and manner of speaking are quite different from ours."

She admits, however, that the characters portray some of her own personal traits. "I develop many of my own thoughts through Marc, and I suppose I am highly strung like Serge." Could the play be performed by three women? "Impossible. Women are more curious, inquisitive beings. After years of camaraderie, they would be completely au fait with each other's foibles."

Reza's background is exotic. Her late father, a Jew whose roots were Iranian, was born in Moscow but brought up in France. Her mother, a violinist, is Hungarian. "My grandparents and most of my

relations are scattered all over the world," Reza explains. "Growing up, it gave me a broader perspective than my peers, and I often write about foreigners. We are a close-knit family. At home, our humour has always been intrinsically Jewish. Jews are able to mock themselves. It's the sort of wit that crosses all boundaries."

Perhaps this explains why *Art* has touched a universal nerve. Translated into 15 languages, it has already been seen in Sweden, Norway, Holland, Israel and Germany: it is scheduled to go in 1997 to Canada, Russia, Spain and Italy. If all goes well in London, the next stop is New York.

Reza studied drama at the University of Nanterre and later went to the Jacques Lecoq school of acting, but quickly realised that acting did not suit her temperament. "Actors are slaves to the whims of other folk," she says. "I find that intolerable."

Proned to depression, Reza seeks solitude — reading, playing classical music and the piano. Her views on success are ambivalent — it both thrills and disturbs her. "Of course, it is wonderful to be praised and fêted," she says. "But you expect, in the middle of all the glory, to be over the moon with joy. My great flaw is that I am unable to be happy in the present. In retrospect everything is marvellous, and I have hope but no expectations — and there is a difference — for the future. But today is an illusion."

● *Art* is in preview at Wyndham's Theatre from tonight and opens on October 15 (0171-369 1736)



Yasmina Reza on contradictions: "A person can think about laxatives while listening to Schoenberg"

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'All I want to do is to prove myself in the same way as Orson Welles,' says the playwright Martin McDonagh

THE TIMES ARTS



ON MONDAY

Francis Bacon revealed in our exclusive serialisation of Michael Peppiatt's biography



NEXT WEEK

Apocalypse then, but a little light comedy now: Francis Ford Coppola on his new film

GREAT BRITISH HOPE

Rising stars in the arts firmament

MARTIN McDONAGH

Age: 26.

Profession: Playwright.

Forthcoming: At the end of November, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* returns from a tour of Ireland to the West End — the Theatre Downstairs, St Martin's Lane. In mid-December, *The Cripple of Inish Moor* starts at the Cottesloe.

How prolific is he?

McDonagh has seven plays in stock. "They're all pretty good," he says. He has also written 22 radio plays, all rejected by the BBC. "I once had six turned down in one day. I would never accept any offer from BBC Radio now."

Doesn't that sound arrogant? Up to a point, but then he is the winner of the 1996 George Devine Award for Most Promising Playwright. *Beauty Queen* was ecstatically received in the spring. "Hilariously funny" and "wickedly enjoyable" being typical notices. "I don't mind being called arrogant," he says. "All I want to do is to prove myself in the same way as Orson Welles or Muhammad Ali."

Any theatrical heroes? "I think I've been to the theatre about 15 times in my life. I quite like some early Pincher staff, but I admire film-makers such as Scorsese, Leone and Keaton. My aim is to get as much John Woo into the theatre as possible."

So does cinema beckon? "I'd be happy to stay in Britain and make a film like *Trainspotting*, or follow an independent Hollywood route."

How does he work? "I write very quickly and I'm very much a first draft man. I try to bring a 100 per cent perfect script to the first rehearsal, but I suppose it can be around 90 to 95 per cent. I never really wanted to work, and I certainly don't call this work. I was unemployed for a long time with the odd spell in an office and a supermarket. Cash doesn't seduce me at all."

GUY WALTERS

Starting next week, *Great British Hope* will appear on Wednesday's arts pages

Clowns touched by Hamlet

Until now Neil Simon has enjoyed about as much success in London as our own Alan Ayckbourn has enjoyed in New York — considerably less than his theatrical skills and popularity back home suggest that he merits. But could *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* be the play to transform Simon's British for-

THEATRE

Laughter on the 23rd Floor Queen's

tunes, coming as it does with a lovely, lugubrious performance from Gene Wilder as the TV comic at its centre?

One accusation against Simon has been that a wry, rueful and very American sort of sentimentality mars his work. Well, *Laughter* does get slightly mawkish at the end, but elsewhere it is as brashly funny as anything he has written. Another accusation is that he is overdependent on smart one-liners and put-downs. But *Laughter* involves a bunch of feisty, wrangling scriptwriters who use jokes as everything from evasion to aggression to cocky self-display. So quip becomes character and repartee is dramatic action.

Like Simon's recent *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound*, the comedy is semi-autobiographical. Back in the early 1950s he actually toiled alongside Mel



"Using jokes as everything from evasion to aggression to cocky self-display": (from left) Linal Haft, Rolf Saxon, Toby Whitehouse, Gene Wilder

Brooks, Woody Allen and others composing TV sketches for Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*. At the Queen's, Simon himself is transformed into

Toby Whitehouse's bashful young Lucas Brickman, and the great comedian has become Wilder's Max Prince: an ochre-faced sad sack exuding baffled, beleaguered and highly entertaining gloom.

Offstage, all is dreary, dire or both. Joe McCarthy denounces General Marshall, the Rosenbergs are electrocuted, and blacklisting has hit Hollywood. Moreover, TV parachutists are in the process of trimming and emasculating a Prince show they think too sophisticated for Iowa and Nebraska. That gives the fe-

brile atmosphere usual on the 23rd floor — shoes flung from windows, crazy graffiti scrawled on walls, obscene calls to St Patrick's Cathedral — its cause and its meaning. Humour for these jokesmiths is bravado and resilience: a frenzied challenge to a grim, forbidding world.

The play itself intermittently veers off in odd, idiosyncratic directions. One scene involves the team's stony resistance to Linal Haft's fra, a dedicated hypochondriac who staggers in clutching his chest and extravagantly moaning for the

medicos. Another exploits Prince's deep psychological terror of white suits by forcing Rolf Saxon's nattily dressed Mill into elaborate concealments and camouflages. Funny though they are, both episodes need more pizzazz than Roger Haines's production gave them on a sometimes nervous first night.

Never mind. The main emphasis is Max's losing war with TV executives who "wear black socks up to their necks and dance with their wives and put up wallpaper in their garages". That requires Wild-

er to seethe, bluster, put his fist through the wall, and gradually evolve from incoherent paranoia to stunned dismay. There are faults with his performance. He lacks the anger and the strength that an underling attributes to him. But you should hear him emitting mad military threats against the TV moguls or watch him falling asleep on his feet, victim of a blend of tranquillisers, booze and exhaustion. Like me, you will probably laugh a lot.

This review appeared in later editions of *The Times* yesterday

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Decline and fall of the publisher

The City has fallen out of love with publishing, says Michael Sissons

As British publishers leave the Frankfurt Book Fair this week, they return to an industry in deep trouble. Publishing has been a flagship business for 100 years, at the centre of our social, political and cultural life, a shining example of success abroad. Educational, scientific and reference publishing remain strong and profitable. But the conglomerates have now swallowed many leading trade publishers. This has been neither a happy nor a successful experience. It is a demoralised industry which has lost its way.

The halcyon days of general publishing were from 1930 to 1960. Perhaps the best account of that period was Fred Warburg's autobiography, *Occupation for a Gentleman*. This title froze in popular perception the image of a refuge for the more languid products of Oxford. Yet the founders of the great imprints of that period, Allen Lane at Penguin, Jonathan Cape, Hamish Hamilton, Michael Joseph, George Weidenfeld, Warburg himself, were hardly gentlemen in their business dealings. Penguin pioneered paperback publishing but the most successful was Bantam. Collins, the biggest modern publisher of selling and promoting books into every corner of the English-speaking world, Collins was formidably efficient and profitable.

Throughout the Sixties, publishing remained powerful and influential. But publishing failed to weave its fortunes into the emerging power of investigative journalism and television. By the 1980s, the dominant position of British publishing worldwide had been eroded. American publishers were active in world markets. Countries such as Australia and Canada had developed indigenous publishing. The book, as a unique vehicle for entertainment, education and information seemed threatened by new media. A communications revolution, driven by new technology, heralded an electronic future which would change all assumptions about the delivery and the reception of the word.

But the markets for the first time focused on general publishing, as financial analysts awoke to the media sector, about which the City had been notably ignorant. They correctly forecast the prospects of commercial growth from the media explosion. They correctly perceived a great shortage of media stock. It was not easy to buy into either television or newspapers. They saw rich pickings in publishing. At the end of the 1980s, extraordinary prices were paid for British publishers, and the face of the industry was transformed. Yet a further assumption made by the City has been flawed. If you turned an occupation for gentlemen into a modern business, it was thought, with costs cut to the bone and marketing welded onto existing creative strengths, a highly profitable future beckoned. A hundred or so general publishing firms shrank to under ten major publishing groups. HarperCollins, Random House, Reed, Hodder Headline, Macmillan, Penguin and Bantam Corgi dominate the premier league. The smaller houses of the penumbra seem fated to become the feeders, the providers of talent for the big battalions.

The management of this volcanic transition has been pretty disastrous. The profit which consumer publishing generates rarely satisfies the expectations of public companies for short-term return. A third of the workforce disappeared

and has not returned. These draconian policies have had a catastrophic effect, in the devaluation of the editorial function and the collapse of morale in an industry which is nothing if it ceases to be creative.

Finally, much new capital went not into building steady and sustainable growth but in seeking to capture market share by buying ready-made bestsellers at auction. Christopher Gasson, financial analyst at the trade magazine *The Bookseller*, sees in total some £120 million of unearned advances — thus bad debts — sitting in publishers' balance sheets. A chronically undercapitalised business has used up huge new wealth in no time. The importunate demands of agents and authors are readily blamed for this. But while they sucked hard on the cash cow, they didn't breed with it.

Publishing is now run, in the main, by salesmen and accountants rather than publishers. A publisher must be a businessman with an editorial flair, like Billy Collins. He once returned from a sales trip to Africa talking of a dotty English woman who had lionesses as pets, and motivated Collins to produce one of the biggest bestsellers ever. Paul Scherer, of Bantam Corgi, the one major successful general publisher who has bucked the trend, and arguably the wisest, sums it up: "Without exception the conglomerates have been able to instil neither a sense of loyalty to the firm as a whole nor stability and self-confidence within their staff. They have set individuals and departments at each others' throats. The result has been disastrous."

Publishing needs more than a few bestsellers to survive in the Nineties

The City has fallen out of love with publishing. It has proved difficult to achieve a 10 per cent net return from general books. Public companies and venture capitalists have winced at the cash appetite of publishers. Reed, who paid more than £500 million for its publishing division, was unable to raise £100 million when it put Reed Consumer Books on sale last year. Scherer puts its true value at around £60 million. The sober Boston publisher Houghton Mifflin bought the family firm of Gollancz for £8 million, and sold it just two years later for £2 million. Apart from Bantam Corgi, which has exemplary owners in the German group Bertelsmann, there is little profit to show. There are a handful of publishing houses which are demonstrably well run and well focused, the privately owned Faber & Faber and John Murray, the new firms Fourth Estate and Orion Weidenfeld among them.

Yet the book itself has held its own in an expanding entertainment market, and will continue to do so. English as a *lingua franca* has established itself in the last decade in every field of human activity. We have here a rich resource of creative talent and professionalism at all levels in our language. We need for the future an industry which will reflect and promote that unique natural resource. Publishing doesn't need to be reminded that no job is for ever. But a healthy publishing industry needs continuity, the prudent scattering of seed corn, patience for the long term. It must, above all, respect the editorial function which is its mainspring. It has never subsisted on a diet of bestsellers and never will. We need a new generation of true publishers.

The author is joint chairman of the literary agency Peters Fraser & Dunlop.

A failed single currency would be a disaster for Britain as well as Europe, says John Major

Whether or not to join a single currency, if one comes into being, will be one of the most important economic and political choices to face this country in decades.

The plain truth is that — whether we are in or out — we have a strong interest in shaping the decisions still to be taken. We can only do that if we stay at the table.

This view is shaped by the practical experience of six years as Prime Minister, dealing with the realities of standing up for Britain's interests in Europe. I believe the right course must be to make our choice only when the issues are clear. Our determination to stick to this course is often misrepresented as being simply a balancing act. But it isn't.

There are, of course, perfectly good arguments for and against joining a single currency. But there are many unknowns and uncertainties, all of which could affect our country.

At the most basic level, we cannot yet be sure EMU will go ahead as planned in 1999. We don't yet know who is likely to be in the first wave if and when it goes ahead.

We cannot yet know how much economic convergence will have been achieved. We do not know how strictly the economic criteria

We must not allow EMU to be fudged

will be adhered to. Or whether participants will have achieved the necessary degree of flexibility in their markets to deal, for example, with different levels of structural unemployment.

And we do not know how EMU will work in detail, and what kind of conditions will bind those in it (including such crucial conditions as the regime for controlling each country's budget deficit — the so-called stability pact).

We also need to weigh the effect on the City of being in or out, as one of the major financial centres in the world. A debate is currently under way among the City's financial experts, but there are divided views. And much depends on decisions still to be taken. We need to make sure those decisions protect British interests, whatever course of action we decide on in the end.

We must judge the overall balance of advantage for British business. Here, too, a debate is under way; and there are widely varying views for the moment. And what about other groups, such as farmers? What, for example, will be the implications of the single currency for the operation of the common agricultural policy?

And there are still big questions we need to examine about the relations between those who join a single currency and those who stay out. We want to ensure that these are resolved in a way that does not distort the single market, which is vital to Britain. We need to be sure that the Community budget is kept under tight control. And we need to examine how the Community institutions will function effectively and harmoniously in the changed cir-

cumstances. And we need to consider the implications of all these issues for enlargement of the EU. These issues will have a significant impact on the relative advantage of being in or out. But whatever we decide, whether we are in or out, they will affect us.

If EMU goes ahead, with or without us, it's in our interest to ensure that it does so on a basis and timetable that can be sustained. A failed single currency would be a disaster. Our European partners buy 60 per cent of our exports. Our companies are major investors in their economies. If they destabilise their economies and the single market — for example by fudging the criteria for entry — the British economy will suffer as well. We have a strong interest in a thriving European economy. That underlines that whatever the outcome, it is important to maximise our

influence over the preparations. So Britain's voice must be heard in the European discussion of how a single currency would work. We have made a major contribution already. By staying at the centre of the debate we have ensured that the ERM remains voluntary, relations between the ins and the outs are firmly on the agenda, and we are best placed to resist protectionist measures damaging to Britain's interests.

We will continue to do so. That is in Britain's interest. That is what the City and business expect from us. We must remain closely involved in the debate about the future of our largest market and remain free to decide how best to participate in it.

Britain's own interests will dictate which way our decision goes. To rush into a premature decision, to detach ourselves from the debate about Europe's future, would mean we could neither protect effectively nor advance what we saw as the British interest. We must look at the issues dispassionately and come to the right decision for Britain.

And that is what we will do. If we decide to go ahead in the next Parliament we would consult the British nation in a referendum and accept their verdict. If we think it right to stay out, we will do so.

Portrait of a lady in pearls



Three generations of *Country Life* women: the Hon Anne Wood, 1936; Lady Clarissa Duncombe, 1956, her daughter; and Laura Collin, 1996, Lady Clarissa's daughter

The *Country Life* frontispiece is a great institution — but its classic formula has fallen foul of political correctness

Sometimes we wipe a grubby hand across our eye and surprise it with a tear. *Country Life* magazine is consigning the engagement photograph frontispiece to the spike. Young women are marrying later. They have careers, do not sit for portraits and will not appear dewy-eyed in a glossy magazine, as if contemplating the suitor of an English marriage. The "girl in pearls" has gone the way of the debutante. She has died a natural death. The age has closed her down.

I must declare an interest. At the start of my career I was briefly an editorial assistant on *Country Life*, a post that included editing the frontispiece. I was not permitted to select the girl. That seminal role in the history of British style fell to the Editor, John Adams (or, so we believed, his wife). Each weekend he would carry down to the country a portfolio from the studios of Baron, Lenore, Rosalind Mann and Basano and Vandylve. There, safe from the smoke and sin of the city, he would choose the girl with the scent of hay in his nostrils and the cry of hounds in the air. Back at the office we gambled heavily on the outcome.

The Editor's wife saw Britain's future security as built on the rock of a good regiment married to a good hospital. In those days the girl was usually a nurse (not a witness debutante as often supposed). She had a head start as she was at Bart's, Guy's or St Thomas' and did not marry a doctor.

My job was to phone the lucky winner, hear her squeal of pleasure, check the regiment's name and wish her every happiness. For a young man alone in London, it

was a distracting start to the week. Most of the staff thought the frontispiece sexist, bourgeois and not long for this world. At the time I agreed. It has outlived all our expectations.

One of the most recent girls to receive the call will have been Miss Laura Collin, pictured above, from the September 12 issue. Miss Collin represents the latter-day frontispiece and her marital status is not mentioned. It so happens that both Miss Collin's mother and her grandmother were frontispiece girls, respectively Lady Clarissa Duncombe in 1956 and Lady Anne Wood (later Countess of Feversham) in 1936. We can, therefore, compare similar faces over more than half a century. The comparison shows the change and, dare I say it, decay in this gallery of English portraiture.

The 1930s picture of Anne Wood is superb. The camera is unafraid of her and she of the camera. The hair is simply combed and the eyes look straight at the viewer. Apart from the collar, there is no clutter, just a cool, intimate stare. By the 1950s, Lady Duncombe is presented in less striking fashion. She looks away from the camera and is further distanced by a new-looking dress and studio halo. The face takes up less of the page and we cannot peer into her eyes to fix the personality.

In the Sixties and Seventies, the frontispiece girls followed the shifting sociology of country society. There were fewer nurses, more

secretaries and interior decorators. They married farmers and professional men rather than soldiers. They wore lambswool-with-pearls almost as uniform. But the strength of the picture lay in the face, not the setting. Over time this face softened and narrowed. The make-up became less assertive, the hair more natural. In 1990 colour was introduced, the skin tanned and the mouth began to smile. At some point teeth appeared and have remained ever since.

The magazine has recently strug-

gled to keep the feature alive. Celebrities have refused to judge the "frontispiece of the year" award. Efforts to make the girl more natural and "active" have often been ridiculous. We have had girls with dogs, girls on farms, girls driving cars, girls with men (Good Heavens) and even with children. We have had students, occupational therapists, designers. We have had horses galore. Last month a Miss Hermione Jackson was pictured kissing a horse with her eyes shut — said to be "preparing a yearling for the Newmarket sales

before going up to Newcastle University".

The girls have retreated timidly from the camera and the once-dominant face has shrunk into the background. The photographs have become a clutter of context, of clothes, houses, pets, possessions and the paraphernalia of a career. The frontispiece often looks like a fashion picture or country house advertisement. Miss Collin stands in what seems a rhubarb patch. Her hair is casual, her eyes half closed. The picture is fresh and jolly, but it is not a portrait. By moving from face to activity, *Country Life* has done the opposite of what it intended. The women have been loaded with social and economic symbolism. As for engagement, it is taboo. Political correctness has come to *Country Life*.

Feminists should have cheered the former style. In my view, the old frontispiece rejected both the *Feminine Mystique* of Betty Friedan and *The Beauty Myth* of Naomi Wolf. Ms Wolf may be right that the magazine industry enslaves women with excessive body awareness. (Though she sees women as strangely inert victims of male willpower.) She may protest that the average weight of a *Playboy* girl is 17 per cent below the female average, and that 78 per cent of 18-year-olds are neurotically "dissatisfied with their bodies". *Vogue* may be guilty as charged with inducing anorexia.

These accusations could hardly be laid at *Country Life's* door. True,

the subjects were, at least from the 1940s, engaged to be married. One critic saw the frontispiece girl as "a rabbit frozen in the oncoming headlights of matrimony". But she was hardly presented as a sex object or gender stereotype. Nor, as Lord Clark wrote of the nude, was our eye "accustomed to the harmonious simplifications of antiquity", seeing the woman "not as a living organism but as a design".

The frontispieces were more in the tradition of Victorian "proposal paintings". These showed the woman at a turning point in her life, her face full of hope and decision, often looking into the distance or directly at the viewer and away from the man. To me, the *Country Life* photograph was, essentially, a generalised portrait. It had nothing to do with sex or beauty or motherhood, but conveyed the changing English character through the medium of a face in close-up.

Country Life has moved towards political correctness and fallen foul of it. In giving its subjects props behind which they can retreat from the camera it has given hostages to fortune. Modern photography can be unforgiving, but the photographer's art is to set the sitter at ease and draw character from her or his physiognomy.

A portraitist does not need to fill the frame with horses, gnomes, roses or farmyards; least of all need he make a political statement. These things tell me nothing of a person's character, only their status. I want the full face again. I want to look into the eyes and wonder at the thoughts. The *Country Life* frontispiece is a hundred years old next year. Another 100 years, please.

Music Hall

RADICAL plans from Sir Peter Hall to shake up the English National Opera have gone down like a salt-water gargle at the Coliseum. In an article entitled *The ENO Experience*, in the ENO's in-house magazine, Sir Peter writes: "May I be provocative here?"

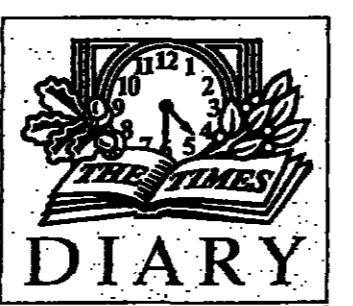


"But can you be certain it's Tony Blair, darling?"

Wouldn't it now be truly revolutionary for ENO to throw away its English-language-only policy and sing with the verbal sound which the composer had originally heard? With surtitles we could get the verbal values as well. Hall is undoubtedly the most important figure in opera and theatre to take such a stand.

The thought of flashing surtitles looming above the crushed velvet for the *sal volatile*. Even though picking out the words sung at the Coliseum can sometimes be like tuning into shortwave, the idea that the ENO might abandon its all-English policy is a non-starter.

Dennis Marks, the general director of the ENO, comes straight back at Hall in the same magazine: "The result of (surtitles) is what someone described as the 'drinking duck' experience, with heads bobbing up and down to grab the odd word here and the odd facial expression there." He then adds: "You wouldn't go to the National Theatre expecting Aeschylus in Greek."



● The publishers Little, Brown, who have contracted Edwina Currie to write two books for £300,000, may find some similarities in the first of the two novels to Currie's own life. Set in 1960s Liverpool, it will tell the story of a Jewish girl who falls in love with a non-Jew, to her family's strong disapproval. Currie herself married Ray Currie, who was not Jewish, and her father never spoke to her again.

Bare cheek

LABOUR's media fixers will stop at nothing to wrong-foot their opponents, not even stripping. On yesterday morning's *Today* programme, Tony Banks, MP for Newham North West and critic of

new Labour, was in mid rant when his co-interviewer Peter Mandelson, MP, Labour's campaign manager, stood up and removed his trousers. With another interview with *Breakfast News* pending, Mandelson claimed he hadn't the time to change more privately.

"It's not something that has happened to me before," said Jim Naughtie, the show's presenter. "I wondered whether I should say anything on air but there are some things even our listeners should be spared."

"Peter had lovely slim, hairy legs," whispered a female eyewitness. But was he wearing John Major's fabled favourite, the Y-front? "No, they were boxer shorts, but they were dark blue."

Hanoi Hirst

HAVING conquered Soho and West Hampstead, Damien Hirst, pickler, has ambitions in Vietnam. He is currently in Hong Kong, from where he will travel to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in preparation for big shows there next year. Hirst's roadshow, entitled *Making Beautiful Paintings*, was the talk of Thursday night's thrash at the ICA in London where *Fool's*

Rain, an aggressively groovy contemporary art show, was opening. While a very casual Lord Rothschild dangled the recently divorced Maya Flick on his knee, Jay Jopling, Hirst's agent, talked up his man's project.

The artist has taken his spin-painting machine out with him to educate the natives in making great art with nothing more than a whirling canvas and a paint gun.

● Another step up the cultural ladder for Tara Palmer-Tomkinson.



Hirst: bound for Vietnam

Chelsea's embryonic Edith Sitwell. Next Thursday, she will be addressing the Cambridge Union, proposing the motion "This house believes in dressing for success". It is her first speaking engagement since her writing career took off. Her fellow debaters are somewhat less stellar. They are the comedian Greg Proops, former *Neighbours* actor Mark Little, Jeff Banks of the *Clothes Show* and the former editor of *Cosmopolitan*, Marcelle D'Argy Smith. Next stop Question Time.

Derailed

BRITISH Rail's last non-privatised InterCity service caused havoc for the hundreds of Labour delegates returning from Blackpool. Less than 48 hours after voting to renationalise the railways, the ramshackle dressed Blairites were hit by two breakdowns on the Preston to London service. The 4.20pm train broke down without even leaving Preston, and its replacement was heaving with passengers from Scotland, forcing many of the delegates onto the floor of first class. This train then broke down in Wigan, forcing passengers onto a third train. Food then ran out in the



Tara: new talking point

buffet and the word "Blackpool" was muttered as if it were a curse. The delegates finally arrived at Euston four hours late. Sir George Young is expected to announce the sale of the InterCity West Coast franchise at next week's Tory conference.

P-H-S



MAJOR'S MAYBE

Maximising influence means keeping EMU open

One issue overshadows this weekend's summit in Dublin, next week's Conservative Party conference in Bournemouth and the looming general election. It occupies no formal place to itself on any agenda. It will dominate neither of the main party's manifestos. But the debate on the European single currency is, as the Prime Minister acknowledges on the facing page, with very English understatement, "one of the most important economic and political choices to face this country in decades". It is, almost certainly, the most important choice the nation has faced since 1945. Over the next week *The Times* will publish the views of the most authoritative voices in that debate within the governing party.

The Government's current position is not as easy to defend as that of its Tory critics. It provides no vivid banner around which partisans can rally. But the position outlined by Mr Major is the best which Britain can currently occupy to safeguard its own interests and those of its European partners. By maintaining a strategic ambiguity on the future of the single currency the British Government may be able more easily to persuade others in Europe to share some of its concerns. As long as Britain reserves its right to join, it can claim a particular role in shaping the single currency's future.

That role could be decisive. The Prime Minister argues that, "a failed single currency would be a disaster". There is no doubt that driving divergent economies into the corset of a single currency would create unemployment, depress demand and provoke social unrest. Mr Major is alive to the pressures on the Continent for some fudging of the convergence criteria to allow countries ill-qualified for monetary union to join the first wave for political reasons. *Amour propre* must not prevail over economic prudence. If the criteria were fudged then the potential economic dislocation would cause turbulence from which Britain could not insulate itself, even outside EMU.

By preserving its freedom of manoeuvre the British Government could make the case for, at the very least, a monetary union which minimised the risks of failure. Better still, a Britain with its influence maximised might be in a position to prevent the flawed project altogether. Britain occupies the EU presidency during the first six months of 1998, when the Council of Ministers will decide whom to allow to proceed to EMU. That decision will be made by qualified majority vote. Britain could, as John Redwood has argued, use that leadership role to persuade a blocking minority of its partners to stop a single currency for which Europe was not ready.

Some Euro-sceptics argue that Britain's ability to make its case would be strengthened if it declared itself against EMU now. A decision will, in any case, have to be taken soon. Britain has had more influence on European employment policy by opting out of the social chapter, flying the flag for enterprise and forcing the Continent to become more competitive than it would ever have done working from within.

But in monetary matters Britain has already exerted influence while keeping its options open. As the Prime Minister points out, as a result of the Government's advocacy, "the ERM remains voluntary, relations between the ins and outs are firmly on the agenda, and we are best placed to resist protectionist measures damaging to Britain's interests". He might also have pointed out that the original Maastricht conditions for any single currency were nudged in the direction of prudence by his and Norman Lamont's negotiation.

Britain's interests may at some stage soon be best served by abandoning ambiguity. But it would be wrong to declare a public refusal to join EMU simply in order to win cheers at the seaside. The harmful consequences of a single currency could be momentous. Mitigating them requires maximum realism and caution.

EUROPE: A HISTORY

A great new work by a great British scholar

Few works of intellectual scope and importance have started with the claim to contain "little that is original". Readers of our books pages last Thursday will have noticed a laudatory review of a book which begins in precisely that way. As our critic pointed out, the author of Oxford's *Europe: A History* is to be admired for more than modesty. Norman Davies has written one of those great books for whom the critics "must read" verdict should be truly heeded.

As we have noted in these columns yet again today, the concept of Europe is the cause of almost constant political wrangling and grief. This gripping account of the continent from pre-history to modernity deserves the greatest possible readership among all who would take part in that debate. On Monday *The Times* will begin a series of extracts which, we hope, will give some sense of the work's extent and variety.

The disavowal of novelty with which the book begins refers to the primary research conducted. The quality of interpretation offered is another matter. It would have been understandable if a 1,200-page text like this had become so saturated with the detail of its story that it could not keep up the narrative momentum or examine wider themes. Yet messages are here in abundance — and much literary pleasure too. This is history as both microscope and telescope.

Professor Davies is an uncomfortable companion to anyone with a fixed view of how Europe should develop in the future. While the contours of the past are carefully outlined, there is no attempt to force, let alone reinforce, some single explanation upon the reader. The opposite is true: the aspects that the professor brings to life should provoke thought on all sides, the advocates of heroic and economic history, the supporter of European integration and the staunchest sceptic.

Europe as a widely recognised idea is more modern, hardly 300 years old, than is often imagined. It grew as a secular re-

ponse to the prior failure of unity around a common idea of Christendom. Acquiring a shared culture to match geography has long proved elusive; the drive for closer European Union implies that this condition continues.

Even its borders are not certain; the question of whether Poland, the Baltic states or Russia mark its eastern boundary has raged endlessly — in both the texts of European writers and the travails of those negotiating Nato enlargement. The defining lines of Europe have included those of the Roman Empire, Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, Ottoman Islam, 19th century industrialisation and wine growing.

A particularly long and destructive trend has been the segregation and downgrading of Central, Eastern, and Southeast Europe from that part which considers itself "Western". That trend continues in the reluctance to expand the European Union.

Exercises of this comprehensive type are now unusual among scholars. The last example was H. A. L. Fisher's *A History of Europe*, published some six decades ago. When such an enterprise is undertaken now, it takes the form of a vast multi-volume series. These have value as a store of reference but not as a book to be read. Of late, history has become more specialised, largely inaccessible outside a narrow circle, and eschewing the broader story. This creates an excessive desire to collect, but not explain, data. Thus more and more, it seems, is known about less and less.

Modern historiography has many more disturbing tendencies still. The concentration on events — cultural movements, political divisions, and socio-economic change — has been downgraded in favour of a vacuous sense of "empathy". Even worse is the fashion for Post-Modernism which denies the analytic value of "facts" altogether. The Davies testament will bring powerful ideas to all who read it. If it has a similar impact on those who write history, then his triumph would be complete.

FOUNTAINS OF ELEGANCE

How to make a fist of communications ancient and modern

The fountain pen is making a comeback in the age of the laptop. A London saleroom yesterday auctioned more than a thousand lots of pens from around the world, including such inky rarities as a Waterman's doll pen too small for any human handwriting. Tomorrow the Royal College of Art opens an exhibition of pens. And jewellers sell bespoke and state-of-the-art fountain pens at prices so smart that they would make pen-pushers of previous generations blot their copybooks in shock.

This revival of the dry-cleaner's best friend flows against the blue-black tide. Until now the ascent of writing instruments has been from the primitive towards the more efficient and legible. So stone chisel was succeeded by stylus. Then reed pens proved finer and more flexible than quills. Inkwells and steel nibs, often crossed, kept the thumbs of schoolchildren ingrained with ink, and made blotting paper a schoolroom tool as necessary as chalk and blackboard. And then came the fountain pen, an early 18th-century invention as revolutionary for clerical life as the paperclip and the fax. Then László Bíró introduced the age of the

disposable ballpoint that needs no refilling — though even he did not finally solve the inkstain problem. For a ballpoint impeding in the pocket makes a mess even more indelible than a bottle of Indian ink. And finally the keyboard has made all writing mechanical, standardised and accordingly legible.

So why are we reading about this revived fashion for the fountain pen? Partly it may be nostalgia for less pell-mell scribbling times, when all morning could be spent in the writing-room composing a powerful letter in copperplate. And then there is no household object so trivial, from matchboxes to dolls, that cannot become a collectible. In their sleek lines, fountain pens are more beautiful than other old tools. And the modern ones made of platinum and jewels are so expensive that they have become objects of discreet pen-upmanship, like expensive watches.

It is still considered vulgar to display a row of fountain pens in the outside breast pocket of a blazer. But it cannot be long before pen bandits start mugging pedestrians in Bond Street just for the wealth clipped inside their jacket pockets.

Letters to the Editor

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Terms of reference for an inquiry into Hamilton affair

From Professor Vernon Bogdanor

Sir, John Major has indicated that he will make all relevant papers available to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. Sir Gordon Downey, in his investigation of the Neil Hamilton affair (report, October 4). Sir Gordon, however, can do no more than report to the House of Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges on his findings.

The committee has a Conservative majority. Any committee composed of Members of Parliament, however fairly it appears to operate, would not command the full confidence of the public in the present climate. Mr Hamilton can only be cleared and public confidence in the probity of MPs restored by an external inquiry.

The allegations made against Mr Hamilton and others amount, surely, to a crisis of confidence in the parliamentary system which needs proper investigation by a statutory tribunal of inquiry under the 1921 Act.

Such a tribunal can enforce the attendance of witnesses and examine them under oath. It can also authorise those appearing before it to be legally represented. That is the only method, surely, through which a satisfactory and impartial verdict can be reached, one which the Commons would not be able to ignore.

What should the Commons do if Mr Hamilton were not to be cleared but found guilty of serious improprieties and of deceiving, amongst others, the Prime Minister and Sir Robin Butler, the Cabinet Secretary?

The Commons has, in the last resort, the power to expel a member. This power has been used twice since the war, once in 1954 to expel Peter Baker, a convicted forger, who would in any case have been unelected.

The other occasion was in 1947, when Mr Garry Allighan was expelled. He had wrongly told a House of Commons committee that MPs were accepting money for disclosing to the press the proceedings of private party meetings, something of which

he himself was guilty. The Leader of the House presented a motion proposing that he be suspended for six months without pay. But, on an amendment by Quintin Hogg, MP, later Lord Hailsham, Allighan was expelled.

It is significant that Allighan, a Labour MP, was expelled by a House containing a large Labour majority. In those days the Commons strove hard to protect its reputation, even where this involved voting against party lines.

Many will feel that the offences of which Mr Hamilton is accused are more serious than that for which Mr Allighan was expelled.

Yours faithfully,
VERNON BOGDANOR
(Professor of Government,
Brasenose College, Oxford,
October 4).

From Mr Alistair B. Cooke

Sir, At the end of a week in which vociferous criticism of Neil Hamilton has appeared in *The Times* and elsewhere, his friends naturally feel deep discontent.

In such circumstances, a friend's testimony is always suspect; however, it is surely not merely a friend's natural bias which creates profound unease about some of the comments.

The central issue has been increasingly obscured. *The Guardian's* case against a gifted and agreeably unconventional MP is founded on allegations by a man whose credibility was long ago challenged.

In a world which attaches so much importance to appearance (and often too little to reality) Neil Hamilton's position today would no doubt appear stronger if he had never had a business association with Ian Greer in the 1980s before he became a successful minister, but it was perfectly legitimate and there is no suggestion that it deflected him from his duties as a Member of Parliament.

It is on Mr Al Fayed's assertions that the case against Neil Hamilton

largely rests. Those allegations must be subjected to the most thorough scrutiny by Sir Gordon Downey, so that justice can be done.

Yours faithfully,
ALISTAIR B. COOKE
Flat 1, 68 St George's Square, SW1,
October 4.

From Mr Stephen Harrow

Sir, Baroness Turner of Camden appears to have been sacked (report, October 4) for having committed two errors of judgment: first, for openly telling the truth as she sees it, when she would have been better advised to fudge and hedge; second, for openly showing loyalty to an old friend and colleague who has become an embarrassment but who has done nothing illegal, when she would have been better advised to disown him.

The Labour leadership seem anxious to create the impression that instant dismissal is how they would deal with such exhibitions of decency by their frontbenchers if they become our Government. I find that impression unattractive — and very disturbing.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN HARROW,
Senior Common Room,
King's College London,
Strand, WC2,
October 4.

From Mr Noel Falconer

Sir, Paying for parliamentary activities is bribery, and accepting inducements corruption. Both require swift and severe punishment.

Defending the accused remains entirely legitimate. Attacking their advocate — Labour's sacking of Baroness Turner — was not justice but an assault upon our system of justice.

Yours sincerely,
NOEL FALCONER,
223 Bramhall Moor Lane,
Hazel Grove,
Stockport, Cheshire,
October 4.

Labour and pensions

From Mr James Jerram

Sir, The article by Anthony Harris ("Labour yearns for Castles in the air", *Business*, October 2; see also letter, October 2) is to be welcomed. It makes the points that pensions, however funded, are a claim on current production, and that real increases depend on productivity gains.

Between 1981 and 1996 gross national product per head in real terms (not exactly productivity, but reasonably close) has risen by 36 per cent. The oldest and poorest members of our society, those living on the state retirement pension, have received no part of this increase. It would be interesting to know why; to know who has had their share; and whether this must continue.

Sincerely,
JAMES JERRAM,
5 Barncroft Way,
St Albans, Hertfordshire,
October 3.

Devolution plans

From Mr Ronald Forrest

Sir, In writing that "Never can a British Opposition have offered the electorate so little structural change in its platform", Simon Jenkins (article, October 2) is very wide of the mark.

The Labour Party's policy is to set up a parliament in Scotland, an assembly in Wales and numerous regional assemblies in England.

This is structural change of mammoth proportions, opening the floodgates to Celtic nationalism and threatening the very existence of the United Kingdom.

Yours faithfully,
RONALD FORREST,
Delfryn, Castle Morris,
Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire,
October 2.

Disability campaigns

From the Chief Executive of Scope

Sir, As the Government wheels out its national advertising campaign promoting the new Disability Discrimination Act with the catchphrase "... from 2 December everybody's equal" it was interesting to listen to Tony Blair's party conference speech (reports, October 2; see also leading article, same day) in which he committed the Labour Party to giving "the disabled the civil rights that the Tories have denied them".

The Government's Disability Discrimination Act is littered with exemptions and qualifications which allow and endorse the continued discrimination against disabled people. With the absence of an enforcing commission and any real teeth, the Act falls short of ensuring that "everybody's equal".

There are more than 6.9 million disabled people living in the United Kingdom. None of the political parties can afford to ignore the voting power of those who really do want equal rights for them.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD BREWSTER,
Chief Executive,
Scope,
12 Park Crescent, W1,
October 2.

Last chance for Middle East peace?

From Mr Menzies Campbell, QC,
MP for Fife North East (Liberal Democrat)

Sir, During the political negotiations to create and maintain an alliance against Saddam Hussein which followed the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 the Western allies, rightly and consistently maintained that there was no linkage between that invasion and the unresolved problem of Israel and the Arab world. But the international community also committed itself, once hostilities were over, to a search for peace in the Middle East more dedicated than ever before.

The Oslo agreement was a remarkable, even astonishing, product of that search, based on the principle of land for peace, accepted both by the Palestinians and the Government of Israel. The practical implementation of these agreements under first Mr Rabin and later Mr Peres was neither easy nor always in accordance with the timetable, but that principle remained as a bedrock. The events of the past two weeks are a direct result of Mr Netanyahu's determination to change the principle to one of peace in return for security.

One has only to ask oneself what the Israeli Government's response would have been if Mr Arafat had embarked on a similar effort to depart from principle to understand just how disturbing the Netanyahu proposal is to the Palestinians. It is also dangerous-

ly undermines the welcome and necessary support given by Egypt and Jordan to the peace process.

Increased settler activity, the failure to withdraw from Hebron, predatory action in relation to Jerusalem and the threat to close Orient House have rubbed Palestinian nerves raw. The opening of the tunnel in Jerusalem was a gross provocation, whether intended or not. If Israel is serious about putting the peace process back on track it will have to make concessions. The closing of the tunnel as Malcolm Rifkind urged may now not be enough in itself.

A democratically elected Israeli Government boldly and bravely entered into the Oslo agreement. Mr Arafat's subsequent electoral victory was ratification of the position he had adopted there. Flawed though it may have been, the course of events which these agreements prompted was the best prospect of resolution of a conflict which has exacted a terrible toll of human suffering on both sides.

The boldness which brought about the Oslo agreement is also needed to save it. Sunday's resumed peace talks may be the last chance for some time for such boldness to be effective.

Yours sincerely,
MENZIES CAMPBELL,
(Liberal Democrat
Foreign Affairs spokesman),
House of Commons,
October 4.

Dress code

From Mr Ashley Mote

Sir, I believe the answer to Dr A. Freedman's question (letter, September 30) about the origin of the warning XYZ — examine your zip — lies across the Atlantic at least 20 years ago. At that time I was writing and directing sales conferences and business presentations for several international companies and encountered a guest speaker in London who had flown in from Toronto.

He opened his speech thus: "Since I have never spoken to an English audience before, I decided to consult the best book on the subject I could find called *The ABC-XYZ of Public Speaking*. ABC — always be cheerful: XYZ — examine your zip ...", which he then did with a great flourish and to raucous applause. The audience hung on every word after that.

Yours truly,
ASHLEY MOTE,
Langley Court East,
Liss, Hampshire,
September 30.

From Sir Rowland Whitehead

Sir, Zipped trousers? Bah! The gentleman says "OBE" (one button exposed).

Yours satirically,
ROWLAND WHITEHEAD,
Sutton House, Chiswick Mall, W4,
September 30.

From Mrs Victoria Furrer

Sir, The response to "XYZ" is "ABC" — all been checked.

Yours faithfully,
VICTORIA FURRER,
Rosemount, Howborne Lane,
Buxted, East Sussex,
October 1.

From Mr Michael Brooks

Sir, Trouser zips only became commonplace well into the 1950s. In the days when buttons were the norm, my father revealed to me as a growing boy the code word "medals". This, he claimed, would only be understood by other men.

Yours truly,
M. J. BROOKS,
76 High Street, Clapham, Bedford,
September 30.

From Mr R. MacAlastair Brown

Sir, The phrase "You're flying low without a licence" should lead to quick covert attention.

Yours truly,
R. MACALASTAIR BROWN,
39 Moss Lane, Bramhall,
Stockport, Cheshire.

From Mr John Wallace

Sir, A warning adopted by my children is "Biggles" — code for *Biggles Flies Undone*.

Yours truly,
JOHN WALLACE,
6 Jennings Road,
Parkstone, Poole, Dorset,
October 2.

From Mr C. R. Cone

Sir, Whistling the tune *Zippedy Doo Dah* has usually worked effectively.

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER CONE,
26 St James's Place, SW1.

Weekend Money letters, page 39

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782-5046.

A safer habitat for Britain's flora

From Mr Roger Smith

Sir, Your superb picture of the snake-head fritillary meadow heralding the *Flora Britannica* launch (Weekend, September 28) makes a very strong message for the conservation of all Britain's flora. So much of our flora, as in these meadows at Oxford, is maintained by the careful management of the habitat to ensure that our rarest species continue to survive to give pleasure and stimulation to each new generation.

Another key element of these conservation efforts has now been partially assured by the support of the Millennium Fund for Kew's new Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place in Sussex.

Kew, with the support of collaborating partners in both government and voluntary bodies, has set an ambitious target to ensure that all "bankable" species of the UK flora will have been deposited in the bank by the year 2000. Once safely stored, species can be kept for centuries or even millennia. They can be studied to discover their hidden potential and reintroduced into the wild at any time.

Yours faithfully,
ROGER SMITH
(Head of Seed Conservation Unit,
Royal Botanic Gardens,
Kew, Richmond, Surrey,
October 2).

From the Director of Plantlife

Sir, Your leading article on Richard Mabey's splendid *Flora Britannica* underlines, in my view, just how appalling the plight of wild plants is in our countryside today because of the widespread and continuing destruction of wild habitats — as typified by, but not confined to, Twyford Down and the Newbury bypass.

Place your leader, numbers do matter. If only to measure the scale of habitat destruction and therefore to show how vital it is to conserve what is left. Since the last war, we have lost, for example, 97 per cent of our wildflower meadows, half our ancient woods, three quarters of our heaths and 98 per cent of our unique lowland raised bogs.

There is no point in pretending things are getting better or that we are now at some low point in the fortunes of wild plants and habitats after which they will somehow revive: unless government and individual attitudes and actions change we shall continue to lose plant communities and species and every year the countryside will be, botanically, poorer than it was the year before.

Flora Britannica is welcome, because in stimulating people to identify and enjoy wild plants it will encourage their conservation. The only worry would be if readers were lulled by its immense wealth of plant lore into thinking that all is well with wild plants in Britain. They are in fact suffering a catastrophe.

Yours faithfully,
JANE SMART,
Director, Plantlife,
The Natural History Museum,
Cromwell Road, SW7,
October 3.

IRA and the Basques

From Professor Emeritus Charles Chadwick

Sir, With regard to your report (September 28) that the Basque separatists have a new hero in Diarmuid O'Neill, it is not difficult to see what the IRA and Eta have in common, other than their terrorist activities?

The IRA wants a united Ireland; Eta wants a disunited Spain. If the Basque separatists believe in self-determination for their own region in northern Spain, should they not support the present status of Northern Ireland, where the majority of the population wishes to remain separate from the Irish Republic?

If the IRA believes in self-determination for the people of Ireland as a whole, should it not support the Spanish Government's refusal to allow the Basque minority to create a separate state in northern Spain?

Yours faithfully,
CHARLES CHADWICK,
The Beeches, William Street,
Torphins, Aberdeenshire,
September 29.

Duchess of York

From Dr Andrew Crowthall

Sir, We should all be grateful to Nigel Lawson for her article (October 1). Many must have been affronted by the public hunt-hunt of the Duchess of York. Have we as a people really become so mean?

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW CROWTHALL,
7 Parkhill Walk,
Off Tasker Road, Hampstead, NW3,
October 2.

Animal insights

From Mr Alan Smith

Sir, My late dog was most intelligent (letters, September 12, 16, 24; October 1). All I had to do was open the door, kick him, and out he went.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN SMITH,
63 Abbey House,
1A Abbey Road, NW8,
October 1.

OBITUARIES

BETTY GATHERGOOD

Betty Gathergood, curator of Dr Johnson's House, died on September 25 aged 80. She was born on February 18, 1916.

BETTY GATHERGOOD was almost as closely associated with Dr Johnson's house in Gough Square as the great man of letters himself had been. As a child she grew up there, playing with her dolls in the powder room where 18th-century ladies and gentlemen had once dusted their periwigs, or curling up to read her book on the low window seats.

As a young woman she met her future husband there, and it was there, in the high Georgian rooms, that they celebrated their wedding and, later, the christening of their son. As an elderly but still gallant and sprightly woman of 77, she became curator of the house — as her mother and grandmother had been before her — and, finally, it was there, at 17 Gough Square, that her friends were to gather last year to celebrate her 80th birthday party.

It was Cecil Harmsworth (later Lord Harmsworth) — the brother of the press barons Lord Northcliffe and Lord Rothermere — who first bought Dr Johnson's House to run it as a charitable trust. As a young man, Harmsworth often used to pass through Gough Square and was shocked to discover that No 17, the house where Samuel Johnson had lived and worked on his dictionary, was due for demolition. Ignoring the warnings of those who advised him against doing so, he purchased the freehold of the house in 1911 and, having restored the building, opened it to the public the next year.

Bertha Phyllis Rowell (as she was before her marriage) first went to live in the house in 1919 when she was only three years old. She was brought over from America where her parents had emigrated after their marriage, but after the death of her father, her mother had returned to London.

Betty's grandmother, Isabelle Dyble, had by this time been curator of Dr Johnson's house ever since it had first been opened to the public. She was living



in the "lodge", a picturesque old-fashioned cottage with brass gaspings and lead plumbing which had been purpose-built as a home for the custodian. It was she who had looked after and preserved the building throughout the difficult years of the First World War, when, it was said, she had devoted herself to reading Dr Johnson's work, turning for solace at times of need to his prayers or his dictionary. "My old man," as she used affectionately to refer to Johnson, would solve her problems for her, she used to say.

A few years after moving in with her, Betty's mother, Phyllis Rowell, took over the curatorship of 17 Gough Square. She

was to remain in this post for nearly forty years, caring for the house and keeping it open to the public even during the perilous years of the Second World War when it was to be almost destroyed three times by incendiary bombs.

Indeed, during the war the house became something of a haven for members of the Auxiliary Fire Service, whose valiant task it was to minimise the damage caused by these bombs. With help from friends and financial donations from City firms, Betty and her mother assembled a collection of chairs, beds, mattresses and even a piano, and moved them into the house so that the firemen could rest and find refreshment there.

Many of them, it turned out, were members of the London Symphony Orchestra, and on tranquil nights strains of Handel or Bach could be heard drifting through the darkness of the square.

Edward Gathergood was the name of one of these firefighters and it was there, in 17 Gough Square, that he courted Betty. He carried her as his bride over the threshold of the house in 1942.

On her mother's retirement in 1962, Betty Gathergood did not take over the curatorship immediately. Instead, Margaret Elliot was to serve in this post for more than thirty years. But after her unexpected death in 1993 Betty Gathergood became the third generation of her family to take over custodianship of the house.

Dust and noise pervaded her first years in the post. Although the basement had already been refurbished and the interior decoration overseen, the exterior had to be attended to. War damage had never been repaired. Furthermore, there was severe cracking in the walls of the custodian's cottage which had subsided after major building works in the vicinity. A severe flood in 1993 precipitated the need for this repair work and while it was under way, Betty Gathergood had to move, commuting from Windsor every day.

Unperturbed by the inconvenience, however, she continued to encourage groups of visitors to visit the house. It was said that it was her magnanimity, courtesy and infectious enthusiasm for the original occupant of 17 Gough Square — she was a mine of stories — that proved one of the greatest attractions to those who came to see the house.

Meanwhile she was hard at work with Dr Beryl Andrews from Cambridge cataloguing the library and attending to the long-neglected records of other items in the house. She even unearthed a few previously undiscovered historical treasures.

She had completed a substantial amount of this project before she became too ill to continue.

Betty Gathergood's husband predeceased her. She is survived by a son.



Betty Gathergood and the house at 17 Gough Square, off Fleet Street, where Dr Johnson lived and compiled his famous dictionary

SABINE ZLATIN

Sabine Zlatin, wartime rescuer of Jewish children, died in Paris on September 21 aged 89. She was born in Warsaw on January 13, 1907.

IN FRANCE she was known simply as "the lady of Izieu". Sabine Zlatin saved the lives of more than a hundred Jewish children in southern France during the Second World War: first as a visiting nurse in internment camps, then as the founder of a children's refuge. But it was the memory of a group of those she was unable to save that came to dominate her life: some 40 children taken from her refuge at Izieu in April 1944 and sent to Auschwitz on the orders of Klaus Barbie, the notorious Gestapo chief of Lyons.

Sabine Zlatin was born into a Jewish family, the Schwasts, in Warsaw. In 1923, at the age of 16, she was imprisoned for taking part in a demonstration by the Bund, a Jewish workers' organisation. On her release, she left France where she met and married an agronomist, Miron Zlatin. The couple ran a poultry farm in northern France, and became French citizens in 1930.

When war broke out, Sabine Zlatin joined the Red Cross and, after the French collapse, went south to serve in a military hospital in Montpellier. Soon, however, she was dismissed from her post under the anti-Semitic laws of the Vichy regime. She began instead to work with the Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants, an organisation which aimed to rescue children who were at risk of deportation.

It was as an extension of this work that in 1943, at some personal risk, she founded the home at Izieu, a small village about 70 miles east of Lyons, on the hills overlooking the Rhone. A farmhouse in an idyllic setting, it served as a holiday home and refuge for Jewish children, who would then be spirited over the border into Switzerland.

For a while the authorities seem to have turned a blind eye, and Zlatin had managed to smuggle more than 100



Sabine Zlatin arriving at the courthouse in Lyons to testify against the former Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie in 1987

children to safety when she was betrayed by a neighbouring farmer. On April 6, 1944, the Nazis arrived, led by Klaus Barbie, the Gestapo chief who became known as the "Butcher of Lyons". More than forty children aged between three and 13 were taken away, together with members of the home's staff, including Miron Zlatin. According to a farmworker who witnessed the raid, the children were

"brutally loaded into lorries as if they were sacks of potatoes".

Sabine Zlatin was not at Izieu at the time. On discovering what had occurred she attempted to appeal to the Vichy authorities, but was contemptuously turned away. The Roman Catholic Church, too, refused to help. From the Paris suburb of Drancy, most of those taken were shipped to Auschwitz. Miron Zlatin and two of the children were killed

by firing squad in Estonia. Only one man escaped.

For the rest of the war Zlatin was a member of the Resistance, and after the Liberation she helped to resettle people who had been deported. Later she worked as a courier, an artist, and as a dealer and expert in rare books. But most of her energy and all of her passion went into preserving the memory of what had happened at Izieu.

Her greatest desire was to see those responsible brought to justice. In this she was not alone. The fate of the Izieu children was one of the factors that drove the French-Jewish lawyer Serge Klarsfeld and his wife Beate to spend 15 years tracking down Klaus Barbie, who had settled in Bolivia after the war.

When the former Gestapo chief was finally extradited to France in 1987, the charges relating to Izieu were central to the case against him: indubitably crimes against humanity, they were unaffected by any statute of limitations that might by then have prevented his being tried for war crimes. More importantly, there was documentary evidence linking Barbie to the raid on the home, in the form of a detailed telex actually recording the raid's completion and sent to Gestapo headquarters in Paris. Barbie denied being present at Izieu, insisting at first that he had signed the telex only "because Eichmann's men were away". He later claimed that the telex was forged.

When the case came to trial, Zlatin was in Lyons to testify, and to hear Serge Klarsfeld recite, one by one, the names of the children and details of their lives: George Halpern, aged 8; Barouk-Raoul Ben-tou, aged 12; Joseph Goldberg, aged 12; Maurice Gershtein, aged 13. "For 43 years," Zlatin said, "I have carried Izieu in my heart. For the crime of Izieu, for this crime, there can be neither forgiveness nor forgetting."

Barbie was sentenced to life imprisonment; he died in 1991. Twice a year Zlatin returned to Izieu to honour the children, whose deaths were marked by a simple monument in front of the house, inscribed with their names. When the farm eventually came up for sale, she founded an association to buy it and turn it into a memorial museum. This was inaugurated in April 1994 by President Mitterrand, and contains all the letters, photographs and documentation that Zlatin could find, as well as drawings by the children.

LORD CLYDESMUIR

Lord Clyde-smuir, KT, CB, MBE, former Governor of the Bank of Scotland and Lord-Lieutenant of Lanarkshire, died on October 2 aged 79. He was born on May 21, 1917.

DEBONAIR and with an erect military bearing and clipped white moustache, Ronnie Clyde-smuir cut a distinguished figure in many aspects of Scottish life. His business enterprises were extensive and his charitable projects numerous. His military record was substantial and his service to the county of Lanarkshire undoubted. He served as Lord-Lieutenant of the county from 1963 to 1992.

Ronald John Bilsland Colville, 2nd Baron Clyde-smuir, was the only son of John Colville, 1st Baron Clyde-smuir, a former Secretary of State for Scotland, and Governor of Bombay (who was three times acting Viceroy of India in the interregnum periods between Viceroys).

The Colville family dates back to the early 1500s and originally had its seat in Roxburghshire. But Colvilles were long associated with Lanarkshire and, beside his political career, Ronnie Clyde-smuir's father was a director of the family steelmaking firm, David Colville and Sons, which contributed much to the industrial history of Scotland. Ronnie himself was later to be involved in this enterprise as a director.

He was educated at Charterhouse and Trinity College, Cambridge. He served in the Second World War with the Cameronians and was mentioned in dispatches. In 1944 he was appointed MBE.

Later, from 1953 to 1956, he commanded the 6th/7th Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in the Territorial Army and was the recipient of the Territorial Decoration. He served as this regiment's honorary colonel from 1967 to 1971, and as president of the Lowlands of Scotland TA & VR Associations from 1968 to 1973. His business enterprises

were widespread. He was a deputy governor of the British Linen Bank, 1960-71, and of the Scottish Provident Institution from 1954. He was a director and then Governor of the Bank of Scotland. He also served as a director of, among several other companies, Barclay's Bank.

His charitable interests focused on physical education. He was chairman of the Scottish branch of the National Playing Fields Association, a trustee of King George's Fields Foundation and King George's Jubilee Trust, and president of the Scottish Council of Physical Recreation.

Lord Clyde-smuir served as a member of the Royal Company of Archers (The Queen's Bodyguard for Scotland) which he joined in the year of the Coronation, and of which he ultimately became Captain-General. Lady Clyde-smuir handed back his Gold Stick to the Queen at Holyroodhouse in July 1996.

He succeeded to the title in October 1954 when his father died on the operating table after a pair of scissors had been left inside him.



Service dinners and dinners

Service dinners

RN College Greenwich. Lord Irvine of Lairg, QC, was the guest of honour at the annual dinner of the Royal Navy Barristers held last night at the Royal Naval College Greenwich. Captain D.R. Humphrey, Chief Naval Judge Advocate, presided. The Second Sea Lord, the Judge Advocate of the Fleet, the Director of Legal Services RAN, the Chief Naval Supply and Secretariat Officer and the Commander of the College were among those present.

Royal Hampshire Regiment. Brigadier R.G. Long attended the annual dinner of the Royal Hampshire Regiment Officers' Association held last night at Serle's House, Winchester. Lieutenant Colonel H.D.H. Keatinge presided.

Officers' Association, with members and regimental guests dined last night at Forbes House, Chidwell, to replicate a dinner held by the Officers of the Battalion in October 1916 at the Chateau Elverdinghe, near Ypres, to honour the award of the Victoria Cross to Captain Noel Chavasse. Major D.S. Evans, chairman, presided. Among others present were: Lieutenant-Commander Ian Fraser, VC, Lieutenant-Colonel D. Tasker (Commanding Officer 5th/9th Volunteer Battalion The King's Regiment) and Colonel R.J. Murphy (Commanding Officer 208 (Liverpool) Field Hospital RANVC).

Dinners

Old Oxford Circuit. The President of the Family Division attended a reunion dinner of former members of the Old Oxford Circuit held last night at the Middle Temple, by courtesy of the Treasurer and Masters of the Bench, to mark the 25th anniversary of the demise of the circuit. His Honour Alan King-Hamilton.

QC. Leader 1961-1964, presided. Mr Justice Popplewell also spoke. Mr Richard Wakerley, QC, immediate past Leader of the Midland and Oxford Circuit, and Mr James Hunt, QC, Leader of the Midland and Oxford Circuit, were the guests.

Past and present members of the Court of Appeal, past and present High Court Judges, past and present Circuit Judges and QCs, were present.

British Association for Sport and Law. Mr Edward Grayson, President of the British Association for Sport and Law, Mr Maurice Watkins,

chairman, and Mr Ray Farrell, chief executive, entertained members and their guests at dinner last night at the Savoy Hotel after the annual conference held at Lincoln's Inn and a reception at Farrer and Company's offices.

Incorporation of Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen of Exeter. Mr R.L. Persey, Master of the Incorporation of Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen of Exeter, the Wardens and the Court of Assistants were the hosts at a dinner held last night at Tuckers' Hall, Exeter, in honour of the Deputy Mayor of Exeter.

DEATH OF MR WILLIAM MORRIS

THE death of Mr William Morris, which we regret to say, took place shortly after 11 o'clock on Saturday morning at Kilmacott House, Hammersmith, after a long illness, removes from the world a man whom we do not hesitate to call a great artist. A poet, and one of our half dozen best poets, even when Tennyson and Browning were alive; an artist whose influence is visible almost everywhere; a craftsman who devoted himself, in a commercial age, to the union of art and crafts, it may be said of him, with little or no exaggeration, that he adorned all that he touched. And, if another famous epitaph may be allowed to suggest itself, we should say that, while his best work — a poem of his own, or a volume from the Kelmscott Press — is often present on our bookshelves, most of us find something in the nature of a monument to Mr Morris in the better taste of our domestic surroundings. It is seldom, indeed, that an Englishman is an artist of this type. True, Mr Morris was neither a painter nor a sculptor. He studied painting for a time, but preferred to give his energies to the more practical arts with which his name has been so long associated, and to the poems some of which, we do not doubt, will live long after him. No

ON THIS DAY

October 5, 1896

The artistic glass, tiles, wallpaper and furnishings which William Morris (1834-96) produced, combined with his literary work, presented a dual existence to the public — poems by Morris, the wallpaper maker, wallpapers by Morris, the poet.

one who has witnessed the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions, which he helped to promote will deny that he possessed and effectively used a remarkable diversity of gifts. To these he added a strenuous and outspoken English nature, such as rarely combines with the typical artistic temperament. ... We have referred to his poems as his best work, and might justify the epithet on the ground that they are oere perennius, while the concrete productions of his factory must needs perish in process of time, or be debased by the imitations of inferior art. But we do not know that Morris himself would have taken this

view of the fruits of his life. One cannot read his poems without feeling that their easy music, not hammered out, but flowing free, must have been a source of pleasure to the writer; yet his sense of beauty and his energy perhaps found a still keener gratification in the material things produced by his hand and under his direction. Enlarging on whatever Mr Ruskin has said of the nobility of honest work, and utterly despising the notion that an artist should plan and design, but, save in the finest of line art, not execute, Morris held not only that executive handicraft was within the province of an artist, but that all crafts demanded artistic treatment. This principle he preached and practised with a good deal of enthusiasm, and we wish we could add with an equal degree of success. It was of "us handicraftsmen" that he spoke to the Trades' Guilds; and it was as a "common fellow" that he addressed a gathering of Birmingham artists and workmen. His cardinal principle was "Art made by the people, and for the people, as a joy to the maker and the user." "I do not want art for a few any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few," "You," he said, "whose hands make those things that should be works of art, you must be all artists, and good artists too, before the public at large can take real interest in such things."

GARDENING



On Apple Day, some healthy advice for growers

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PLUS: Your questions answered, page 5

TRAVEL

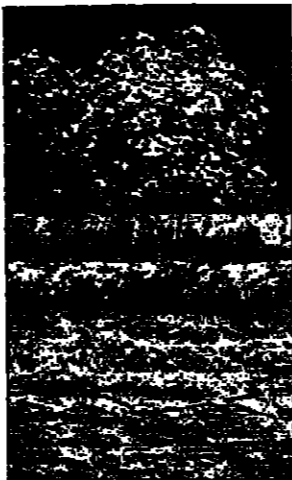


The best in skiing this winter, starting with France

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PLUS: Two nights in Paris from £39, page 11

BOOKS

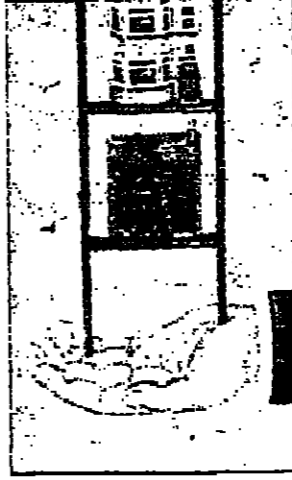


Save £5 on the new definitive guide to our wild flora

Page 7

PLUS: Part 2 of Flora Britannica, page 28

PROPERTY



Special deals are tempting first-time buyers

Page 11

PLUS: When a pub is home, page 12

WEEKEND

THE TIMES SATURDAY OCTOBER 5 1996

FRANCES BISSELL'S RECIPE FOR THE PERFECT DINNER PARTY



I have friends who say they never give dinner parties any more. They "invite people for supper". But go to their house for "supper" and it's a glass of bubbly pressed into your hand before you have time to get your coat off. When the time comes to eat, the dining table sparkles with china and crystal. The candles are lit, the white wine is brought out, properly chilled, and something red and glorious is served with the main course, as well as something delicious with the pud, or puds.

Before that, there will be carefully chosen cheeses, and sometimes, even home-made bread. I call this a dinner party. Why all this inverted snobbery about a name?

We read much in the style pages about the demise of the dinner party; friends now meet for supper at one another's homes, eating informally at the kitchen table, dining off dishes quickly unpacked from M&S. Or they meet and go Dutch in the latest fashionable mega-restaurant. Perhaps this gives the game away. These anti-dinner party souls

HOW TO WIN THE TIMES COOK IN YOUR KITCHEN
SEE PAGE 2

live in cities, where there is a "latest fashionable restaurant" to which they go. But not all metropolitans are anti-dinner party, and not all kitchen suppers are dressed-up

convenience food. A few weeks ago, staying overnight with friends, we were told that Saturday evening was to be a kitchen supper for the four of us, Saturday lunch having been for 16 people. The food was simple and delicious and yes, convenient, in its way — figs and prosciutto, a creamy fish pie and leftover summer pudding. But the vintage Bollinger was followed by 1986 Bâtard-Montrachet from two different single vineyards.

Why do we actually give dinner parties? Is

it to network? To impress people? To make matches? I'm afraid I have never progressed beyond the stage of simply wanting to invite friends in for good food and wine. A couple we had not known for very long were, I know, disappointed to come for dinner with us and find no one to network with.

For whatever reason, and no matter how often it is labelled "unfashionable", the dinner party is alive and often elaborate.

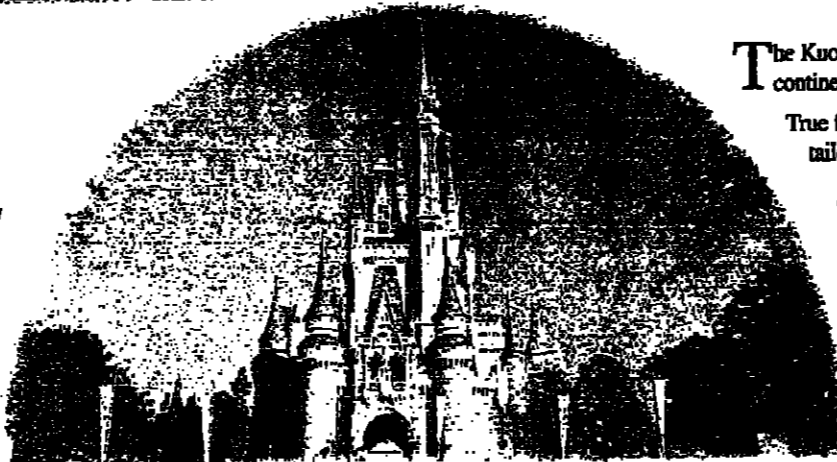
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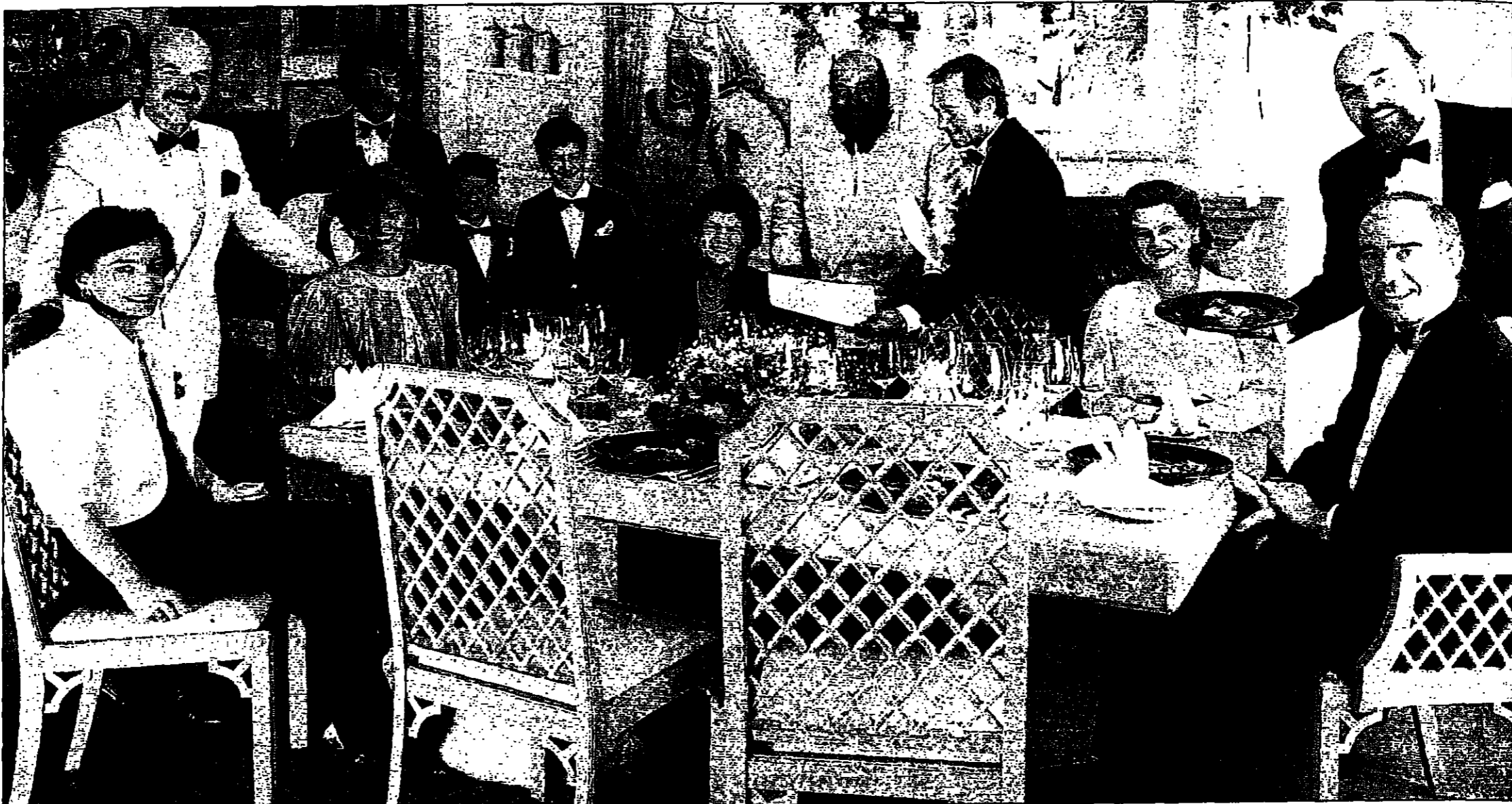
'I hope the invitation says come hungry, come thirsty and come in a taxi'

Continued from page 1
In London, The Brides Book department at Peter Jones, the experts on such matters, confirm that all the accoutrements of the dinner party are still sought-after wedding presents, although grandeur and opulence has given way to simplicity and clean lines, and more informal dinnerware is being sold. By all accounts, the New York dinner party scene is thriving and quite often to be found entertaining members of new Labour.

Whole shops in Paris are devoted to "l'art de recevoir" and the glossies are full of glamorous recipes for entertaining. And, judging by the letters I receive, readers of *The Times*, everywhere are staunch dinner-party people. Special occasions are planned weeks, if not months, in advance, recipes are tested and menus are carefully planned. Sometimes I get frantic letters saying: "A year or two ago, you gave a marvellous recipe for such and such, which we all liked very much. I want to serve it next week for a dinner party, but I can't find the recipe. Help!"

At home, I have been cooking for friends for many years, more than 20 of them documented in a series of food diaries. At the end of each year, I buy a French household *agenda* and use it to make a note of what I cook every day, what is in season, how much it costs, and an occasional shopping list. I started doing this long before I became a food writer, and it has proved useful. I do like to check that I am not planning to give friends the same main course they ate the last time, and Tom, my husband, always wants to know what wines he served.

Food and wine, although an essential element, are not the only consideration. There is, for want of a better word, etiquette. Life is too short, and we are all too busy to spend three or four hours in congenial company. In the days of casual telephone invitations, pitfalls await the unwary. "Are you free on Friday evening?" You say yes, and then you hear, "and we thought we would invite X and Y". You can't stand X and Y, but it is too late to back out. A better approach might be: "We are inviting X and Y for dinner next Friday, and we wondered if you would be free to come, too?" There is now enough time for an inventive and face-saving excuse. I cannot commend this ploy too highly. A friend told me that once she was left sitting at a dinner party in the realisation that her husband was never going to return from a visit to the lavatory. It was summer, and he had been overwhelmed by the sight of the open front door and the garden gate, a much more attractive prospect than returning to sit beside a particularly difficult guest.

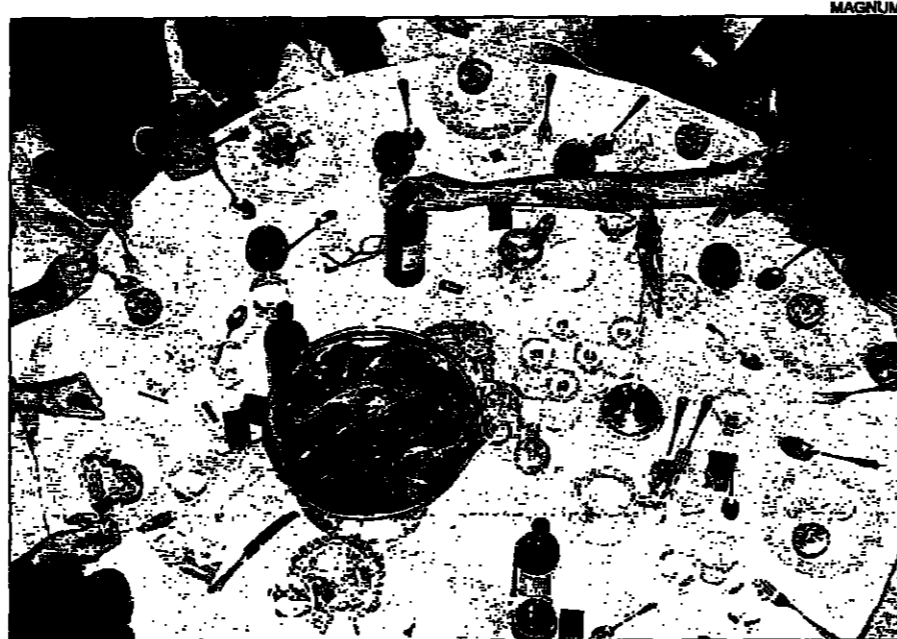


The most daunting dinner guests in the world? Frances Bissell once cooked for chef Anton Mosimann (standing, far left), his wife Kathrin and their guests, who included Nico Ladenis, chef patron (with dish, far right)

My husband says that two expatriates should never be seated next to each other at a dinner party. If they wanted to talk to their countrymen, they would return home. Expats are not tourists; they secretly want to belong.

Is there anything you can't eat or drink, is a question I always ask if somebody is coming to dinner for the first time. When people answer on behalf of others, they do not, however, always get it right. Who would have thought melon would be a problem. Once I served melon sorbet to some friends, and after smelling it, one of our guests turned quite funny and had to leave the room. His companion had told me earlier in the day that he could eat anything. On another occasion, a food writer friend was bringing a well-known television cook from America for dinner. Do ask her if there is anything she can't eat, I said. "Oh, don't worry darling: she's a foodie, and can eat anything," he replied. But one look at her face, when I served a heaped tureen of mussels, told me otherwise. Smoked salmon came to the rescue though. I wish I could claim always to be so organised.

It is as well to stay relaxed



Not all Metropolitans are anti-dinner party — and not all hostesses are models of perfection

and flexible so that when disaster occurs, you are not so tightly wound up that you snap. I will never forget inviting two serious and important food people for dinner one evening. As a main course, I had planned roasted veal kidneys with a Roquefort sauce, an idea developed from a dish that I once ate at Le Cochon

d'Or in Paris. I thought I would get a little *mise-en-place* out of the way, and, having made the sauce, I decided to half roast the kidneys, and finish them off at the last minute, but I cooked them beyond that point of perfect pinkness. What to do? It was after 6:30 already. I didn't have a freezer, from which to pull out a delectable little standby, and the late-night corner shop had only miserable looking steaks and chops. Tom, who is always looking for a new pasta creation, suggested I make some pasta, chop the kidney, and with the addition of herbs and spices, and a little ricotta, make tortelloni, which I did, and served it with the Roquefort sauce. I do not recommend, however, planning to make fresh pasta an hour before

your guests appear, but it does provide a good solution.

Some years ago, at a charity dinner for the Académie Culinaire, I offered, as a prize in the raffle, to cook dinner for the highest bidder and five friends.

It was both gratifying, and somewhat overwhelming at the end of the bidding, to realise that I would be cooking dinner for the chef Anton Mosimann and his wife Kathrin and their guests, including, I later discovered, the chef patron Nico Ladenis and his wife, Dinah-Jane. I had decided on oriental salmon wontons for appetisers, followed by fennel and champagne risotto, and then pot-roast quail, stuffed with black and white pudding as the main course, farmhouse

cheeses, and to finish, a version of summer pudding, using tropical fruit, which I thought a very clever idea. Hal There is such a thing as trying to be too clever.

The dinner was for Sunday night, and on Sunday morning, I had a peek at the individual puddings I had made the night before. Bread slices had been replaced with sponge, tart summer berries were replaced with diced mango, guava, and papaya with passion fruit juice. It tasted dull and bland, and it was falling to pieces, since tropical fruit has no pectin to hold together. Still with no freezer to fall back on, I had to look to the local shops for the solution. New season's Spanish strawberries, yoghurt, ricotta and cream, and just enough time enabled me to make *coeurs d'*

la crème, macerate some strawberries, and turn some into a coulis. That experience taught me some recipes are so perfect that they cannot be improved upon, and dinner parties do not have to be complicated to be successful.

Since then, I have cooked often for chefs, and I have to say that they are among my favourite guests, as they are the most appreciative. For them, I usually cook the simplest, homeliest food: at this time of year, for instance, perhaps a game cocker, or a shoulder of lamb, slowly braised on a bed of sliced onions and potatoes, in preference to *Roisseries d'agneau en robe de soir*, as it were.

The cellar master in our house has reminded me to include wine etiquette in this article. Do you take a bottle when you are invited for dinner? If you know your hosts, then you will know the answer. If you do not know them, you risk upstaging the host with a better bottle, and worse, offending him, or her, by implying that they might serve inferior wine. The cellar master once got his come-uppance, when asked by a guest what he should bring. "Oh, something dry and white," was Tom's response. A

bag of white flour was what he got. On the other hand, a bottle from a fine cellar is more than welcome, especially when it is given to be put away for a rainy day.

What is the perfect number of guests? I am happy cooking for a foursome. Six is fine, too, but eight tends to break up into two parties. Five is my absolute ideal number.

People often ask me if Tom and I get invited back, meaning, I suppose, that some people might be reluctant to invite the scrutiny of a professional cook. I would like to say we do, but, as Tom says, when guests are into their second bottle of claret, they will say anything, even: "You must come to our place soon." He sometimes wonders, does "soon" mean next month, next year, or indeed the next century. But when the invitation does arrive, I hope it says: "Come hungry, come thirsty, and come in a taxi."

Frances Bissell's recipes for busy cooks: Magazine, page 59

Cover picture by CORBIS-BETTMANN
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Frances Bissell is the award-winning author of nine cookery books. You can see her in action on the first day of the International Festival of Wine and Food, sponsored by *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, at Olympia 2 from October 24-27.

HOW TO ENTER

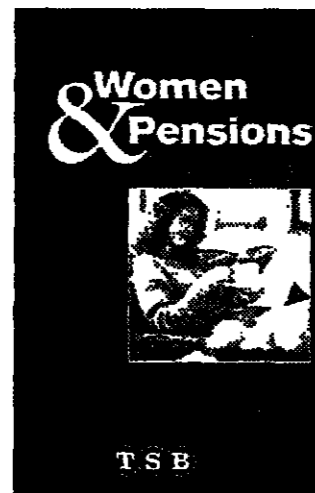
To win a meal cooked by the woman who has been called "the best private cook in Britain" answer correctly the three questions below, then call our hotline on 0839 444572 and leave your answers, name, address and day-time telephone number. The winner will be drawn after lines close at midnight next Saturday. Calls cost (per minute) 39p cheap rate and 49p at other times. (From Wednesday, per minute) BT 45p cheap rate and 50p at other times; Mercury 49p; Republic of Ireland 58p. Standard *Times* Newspaper rules apply. The prize must be taken by December 8, 1996.

Here are the three questions:
1. Which country do you associate with lasagne verde?
2. What ingredient is used to create the "islands" in *les flottantes*?
3. Which ground spice is produced from the outer casing that grows on nutmeg kernels?



Frances Bissell, *The Times* Cook, has written nine cookery books

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For those who used to like bread and dripping, here's the recipe for a truly flavourful meat dish that may shock the muesli martyrs

Why I've no beef about pork fat

This being the party conference season, it is time to fling a few bogey words around — socialism, poll tax, Clause 4. You know them as well as I do: they were all once embraced, but are now shoved on to the back burner, the gas turned down, and allowed to become cold and indigestible.

Can I hurl another couple of embarrassing bogies at you? They are foods which we once held dear and are now too ashamed to contemplate. They stare up at us from the butcher's slab with demonic eyes. They are beef and pork fat.

Beef first. People are becoming coy about their beef habits. To boast of being a beef-eater these days is to risk the pitiful glance that the early muesli martyrs gave to those who remained faithful to the fry-up. There may well be nervous families huddling round a bit of rump at this very moment, curtains closed in case the neighbours spot the mustard jar, put two and two together and start throwing stones.

Beef-eating is bad enough, but what about pig fat? Is there anyone left in this country who will stand up and declare

themselves to be fond of a bit of bread and dripping? You might as well call for the springing up of cats. Somehow, we have been persuaded it is lethal, clogs the arteries and gums up the works — which it may well do if taken to excess. But what has happened to a sense of moderation? Thrown out with the bathwater, and the pork chops with a nice bit of fat on them.

Of course, it is not many years since there existed a breed of pig, widely farmed in Dorset, which was called the "ice-cream pig". These pigs were bred to have plentiful back-fat, which was removed at slaughter and processed into ice-cream. Do you remember that glum warning which said, "this product contains non-dairy fat"? Did you know exactly how far removed from the dairy it was? I did not believe this when first told, but then a farmer said to me: "Why do you think Walls used to make bacon and pork pies?" So, 25 years ago, you and I

strolled along the prom clutching a cornet, licking at our processed pork fat and thinking we'd never had it so good.

Shunning all modern food fancies, and with the bravery of a man standing up at the Tory party conference calling for a tax on blue rinse, I offer a dish which fulfils all the requirements of the modern, fapophobic eater while actually bringing together these two bogey ingredients, beef and pig fat. But I warn you, you will have to be brave, and trusting.

I have recently returned from the southwest of France and, pining somewhat for the robust food, my hand fell on Paula Wolfert's *The Cooking of South-west France*, in which she introduces

HOME MADE



Paul Heiney

double-degreasing. Veteran motorists will remember a technique for getting elderly cars over hills, called double-declutching. Well, this recipe for "Doubt for Early September" will get you over the Fear-of-Fat hump that has been keeping you from some truly great dishes. It takes two slow days to cook, and some occasional delicate attention.

Buy a 3lb silverside of beef. It is a dense, meaty cut with little fat, and is cheap. If there is any fat to be seen on it, remove it. Now, cause your butcher to rock back on his heels by asking for 3lb of pork back-fat with rind. You may be the first person in the last ten years to make such a request. This is cheap, too; I paid 95p.

Cut the silverside into half-inch slices, having rubbed the joint with plenty of black pepper, but not too much salt. Remove the rind from the pork back-fat (while marvelling that man once devised a way of turning this into something that could be eaten with a chocolate flake) and then cut the fat into chunks and, using a food processor, turn it into a thick paste while adding a chopped onion or shallot, parsley, garlic and pepper. It is not terribly attractive.

Line a heavy, cast-iron casserole with the pork rind — the skin side must be inwards or it will stick — and then put a layer of beef, a layer of the pork fat mixture, and another of beef, till you have used all the ingredients.

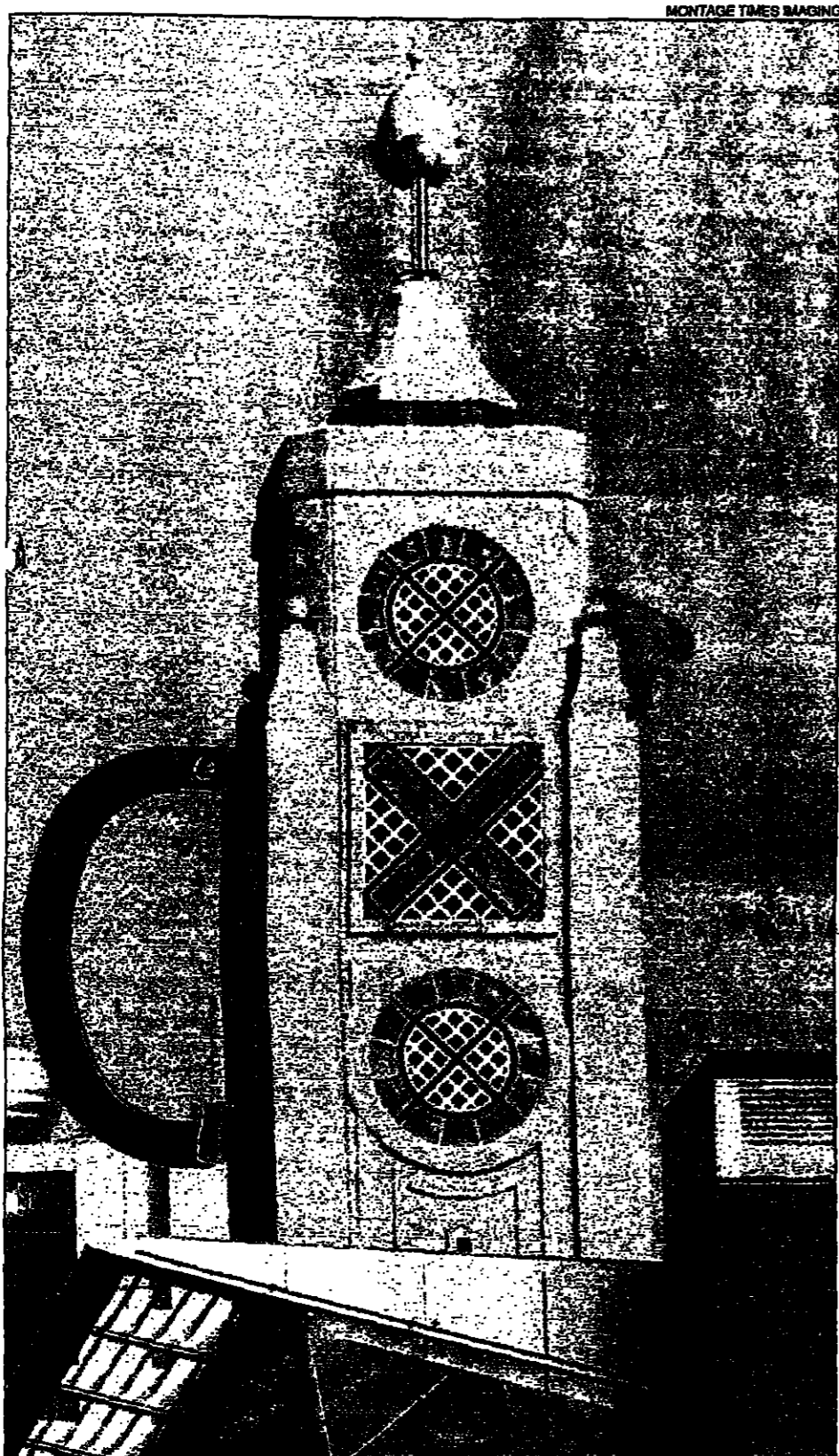
Take a bottle of strong red wine and boil it for 15 minutes till it has lost the alcohol (heartbreaking) and then add to the casserole. Put on a tight-fitting lid,

and place in a slow oven. After six hours, remove it and allow to cool without the lid. The disgusting, flabby pork fat will have risen to the top of the dish, there to await removal by you, patiently, with a teaspoon.

Spare no effort to remove every trace. But, although this is the point at which we say goodbye to the pig fat, it will have left behind those subtle but vital flavours that only animal fat can give to food. Then back into the oven for another hour, another cooling, a further fat hunt. Now you can remove the cool, clean beef slices to a serving dish.

Strain the remaining juice to remove even more fat and rind, and then reduce the juice till you have a sauce. You can even skim this to ensure that — watch my lips — there is hardly any fat left in this dish. Yet I promise you will find more depth, subtlety and honest flavour in these slices of beef than you ever thought meat could contain.

If you try this in winter, save the fatty pork rind for the birds. And reserve a smug look of pity for those misguided souls who think fat-free must mean bland.



The Oxo Tower Brasserie, near the National Theatre, offers pre-show suppers at £15.50

Coffee exotica

I HAVE BEEN bombarded with news about exotic coffees. Whittards, which has just launched a "Get Real" campaign encouraging us to drink proper coffee, has as its Coffee of the Month an Elephant Ears Coffee (so called, you will be relieved to hear, because of the shape of the beans), while Taylors of Harrogate has brought out a connoisseur range, including Tanzanian Kilimanjaro Mountain, Cuban Havana Gold, and a South African arabica coffee.

All this is good news for the thrillphiles among you who need their palate tickled by new and exciting products, but, as I learnt from two newcomers to the coffee scene, Jeremy Torz and Stephen Macatonia, this week, the origin of the beans is not as significant as the type of roast and the freshness of the coffee.

I tasted their basic Kenyan coffee at their microroastery (the caffeine equivalent of a microbrewery) in Essex, and it was a revelation: fresh, crisp and zesty. I can think of nothing better to start the day.

T&M have a theory that certain coffees suit different times of day, mood and even styles of cooking. Most of their business is in designing exclusive blends for leading London restaurants: the River Café, for example, has a strong, dark, typically Italian espresso; Pied à Terre, a French restaurant, a much lighter, more elegant blend; while the new Oxo Tower restaurant has an attention-grabbing, highly aromatic style of coffee.

They will also supply to private customers by mail order (0181-500 2195). Beans are roasted and, if you wish, ground to order. If you want to appreciate the beans at their best you should use them within a fortnight, though you can keep them in the freezer for a little longer. If you want to experiment, T&M offer three different 227g (8oz) sampler packs of four different coffees for £12.50 to £15.25, plus £3.50 p&p. And, yes, they

do have some exotic ones. Thrillphiles should try the Yemen Mocha Mattari which has — how shall I put it — a farmyardy quality not dissimilar to a good burgundy.

Plump role

THOSE who feel oppressed by the size 10 figures of most television food presenters should tune in next Wednesday to *Two Fat Ladies*, the first of a BBC2 six-part series featuring the outsize figures and personalities of cookery writers Jennifer Paterson and Clarissa Dickson Wright. Not only are the ladies large but they're utterly un-PC. They advocate (in cut-throat Roodean accents) limitless use of cream (Paterson: "I like rich food. None of this nonsense about yoghurt instead of cream"), they rubbish vegetarians, call scallops "charming little fellows" and produce dishes that would feed a small army.

If you actually want to pick up any solid culinary information, you'll have to buy the book of the series (published by Ebury Press at £17.99), which includes guidance on cooking a whole beast on a spit ("a surprisingly cheap way of catering which always causes excitement"), a recipe for Roast Meat Loaf or "Hedgehog" ("a robust strongly flavoured monster... excellent for picnics, parties, christenings and wakes") and a memorable set of instructions for making a Shooter's Sandwich.

Spicy stuff

UNLESS you have a particularly good local Indian restaurant you may do better getting your takeaway off the supermarket shelf. This week saw the launch of a range of regional Indian recipe dishes from Waitrose, which make chicken tikka masala look about as interesting as a Big Mac. There are enough different dishes to give you a real

DIGEST



Fiona Beckett

feel for the differences in ingredients and spicing between the regions. My favourites were the Chicken Achari, a creamy aromatic dish from Hyderabad, and the herby Green Chutney Chicken from the Punjab, a must for coriander (and mint) addicts. Considering that the recipes use authentic ingredients and spices such as jaggery, curry leaves, cardamom and awain seeds, they strike me as remarkably reasonable. Most of

the chicken dishes are £2.79 for a one-portion pack, and you could put together a generous meal for two for under a tenner — cheaper, certainly, than my local Indian.

Show supper

PRE-THEATRE suppers used to be the stock-in-trade of the rather sad sort of restaurant which couldn't entice you through their doors at any other time, but these days some of the smartest restaurants have realised that this is a money-maker. Among the best deals in the West End are £14.50 for three courses at Quaglin's in Berry Street, £13 for two courses at L'Odeon in Regent Street, and two alternative menus at Mezzo in Wardour Street — the rather neat "£7 before 7" deal in the upstairs Mezzanine restaurant or £14 for three courses downstairs. Opera lovers can pick from Brown's in St Martin's Lane, up the road from the English National Opera (any two courses for £9.95) and Christopher's in Wellington Street (pre or post the Royal Opera House) at £15 for three.

South of the river, within striking distance of the National Theatre, there is the Oxo Tower Brasserie in Barge House Street (£15.50 for three courses) and the fashionable new fish restaurant Livebait in The Cut (£11 for two courses). The only problem with this

proliferation is that you now need to take as much care selecting your dining venue as you do in picking your production. Mezzanine, for example, boasts a singularly spicy southeast Asian menu that would be an alarming precursor for a visit to the Mousetrap with your elderly aunt but ideal to get you in the mood for Miss Saigon.

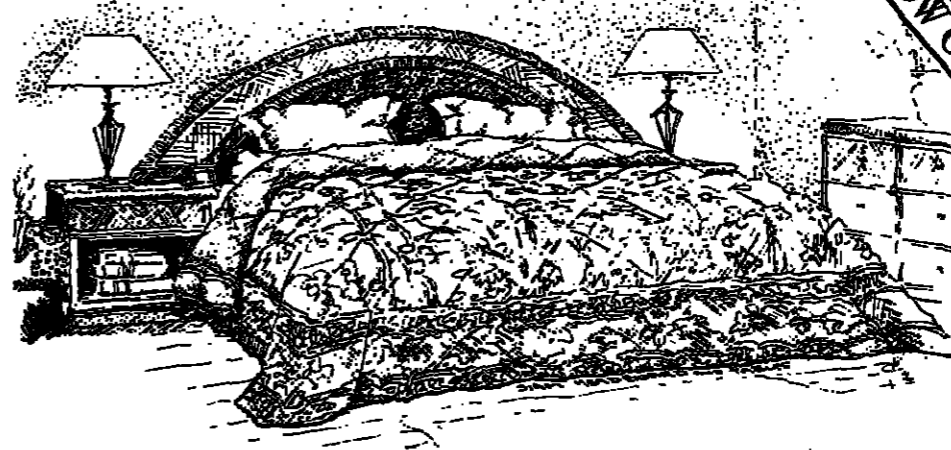
Dished

THE PRIZE for the most pointless product of the week goes to Sorriso Italian-style Risotto alla Milanese, an "instant" risotto on sale at Harvey Nichols in London at £2.25 for a one to two-portion pack. Described as a "fast delicious meal" it actually takes 17 minutes of standing over the stove and stirring — exactly what you do when making the real thing. You'd do better with Marks and Sparks' Italian-style Mushroom Risotto at £1.49, which you can heat in the microwave in a two-and-a-half minutes.

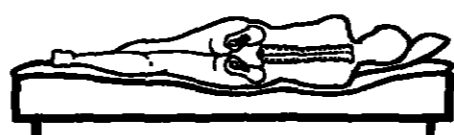
More food and drink in the Magazine

NATIONAL APPLE DAY: CRUNCH TIME FOR YOUR GARDEN
Page 4

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CHOCOLATE BOX

HAD ANYONE other than Antonio Carluccio suggested a dish of wild mushrooms, polenta, game and chocolate I would have reached for my chocolate-coated smelling salts. However, I know that Carluccio, the proprietor of Neal Street restaurant in central London, is incapable of doing anything tasteless to his beloved wild mushrooms.

The dish will be offered for one week to celebrate London's first Chocolate Week, from October 19 to 28, organised by the Chocolate Society, which was inspired to stage this event by the Chocolate Convention, which has been held for the past two years in Perugia in the Umbria region of Italy. Events will be scattered through the capital, and here is a tasty selection.

On October 23 beers will be tasted with Roccoco's fine chocolates at the White Horse in Parsons Green, west London, from 6pm (tickets £10). The idea is to marry rich, malty, sweet beers to finely bitter chocolate.

Malt whisky and chocolate is being tasted on October 22 at Milroy's in Greek Street, central London.

At the Ritz, a special chocolate cake will be included in the hotel's tea (£19.50 a head, eat as much as you like from 2-6pm), and if it is as good as they hope it will become a signature cake for the hotel.

A few doors away in Piccadilly at Fortnum and Mason, chocolates will be on sale made by the Italian chocolatiers Paul de Bindi and Andrea Slitti.

The Chocolate Society will be hosting evening tastings of the Krug of chocolate, Valrhona Grand Cru, with Churchill's port, to celebrate the opening of their first shop at 36 Elizabeth Street, SW1W 9NZ.

JANE OWEN

For details of prices and ticket availability during London Chocolate Week 96 call 01423 322 230. Fortnum and Mason chocolates from the shop in Piccadilly or mail order on 0171-734 8040. The White Horse, Parsons Green (advance bookings 0171-736 2115). Neal Street Restaurant (0171-836 8368). The Ritz (0171-493 8181). Milroy's, Greek Street (0171-437 0893).

Evening class in a meal with appeal

FAST FOOD

VEGETARIAN STUDENT SUPPER

Serves 6

Easy tomato, aubergine and spinach lasagne
Baked apples with mince meat and marzipan

The easiest student supper dishes are cooked in one container. It may be the only large cooking dish available and means minimal washing up, something we all appreciate. Use 1 litre of passata and 8 sliced tomatoes instead of the tinned tomatoes and 250g (9oz) mozzarella and 200g (7oz) feta cheese instead of the cheddar for a more expensive version.

MAKE LASAGNE

Put 250g washed spinach in a pan and heat it gently for 3-5 minutes, until it has wilted and halved in volume, turning it over once or twice. Trim 4 medium-sized aubergines and cut each of them into four long slices. Cut 250g strong cheddar into small pieces. Pour 1tbs oil over the bottom of a roasting tin. Layer up the ingredients as follows: half the aubergine, the wilted spinach, 6 sheets of lasagne, a 400g (14oz) tin tomatoes, 6 more sheets of lasagne, the rest of the aubergine, another 400g tin chopped tomatoes and the rest of the cheese. Season with black pepper.

Pre-heat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas mark 5.

MAKE APPLES

Cut 6 cooking apples in half, crossways. Cut out the core with a knife you can cut it all the way through, leaving a hole at the bottom of the apple) and put in an oven-proof dish or tin. Divide 250g (9oz) marzipan into 12 pieces and put in the centre of each apple. Spoon 1/2tbs mince meat on the top, so that the hole is filled. Cover the dish with tin foil.

Put both dishes into the oven for 40 minutes. If the oven is too small to do this, cook the apples while you are eating the lasagne. Check that the top of the lasagne is not burning after 30 minutes. If so, cover with tin foil.

MAKE SALAD AND DRESSING
Chop up a large iceberg lettuce. Mix together 1tsp sugar, 1tsp vinegar and 1tsp grainy mustard, if you have it. Mix with 4tbs oil. Use olive oil, if possible, though vegetable oil will do. Dress the salad at the last minute so the leaves do not go slimy.

SERVE LASAGNE

... with salad.

SERVE APPLES

... with single cream, if you want.

HATTIE ELLIS

Shopping list

- Fruit and vegetables
- 4 medium-sized aubergines
- 250g (9oz) washed spinach
- 6 cooking apples
- 1 large iceberg lettuce
- Dairy
- 250g (9oz) strong cheddar
- 150ml/1/2 pt single cream (optional)
- Store cupboard
- 1tbs vegetable oil
- 12 sheets lasagne
- 2x 400g (14oz) tins chopped tomatoes
- 250g (9oz) marzipan
- 6tbs mince meat
- 1tsp sugar
- 1tsp vinegar
- 1tsp grainy mustard (optional)
- 4tbs olive or vegetable oil

Gardener's update: Jane Owen on Apple Day, botany courses and the best finds for October

The apple of a nation's eye

Brogdale Horticultural Trust in Kent holds the world's largest collection of apples — 2,300 varieties. This national treasure deserves to be better known. During their Apple Celebration on October 19-21, visitors will be able to tour the 150 acres of orchard and have "fruit doctors" diagnose failing apple trees (bring three apples and a leaf branch) or identify varieties. As a succulent incentive to readers of *The Times*, those who show this column will get 50p off the entrance fee per head, up to a maximum of four people.

Bare-rooted apple trees are for sale for about £10 each — go for Ashmead's Kernel, which was raised by Dr Ashmead of Gloucester in 1700. It is a dessert Russet variety with a rich aromatic flavour, which ripens at the end of October to an attractive greenish-yellow, and should keep until February. Like most of Brogdale's apple trees it can be grafted on to different types of dwarf root stock, depending on the final size of tree.

Apple tasting of any of the 100 or so varieties on display during the celebration is free, and for a mere £1.50 you can buy a carrier bag of your favourite selection. Alternatively, you can sample the apples by checking into a suite at the Ritz (£525, plus VAT per suite per night, excluding breakfast) where guests' fruit bowls include Brogdale apples, pears and other seasonal fruit. Well, at least one national institution is giving a helping hand to its poor relation.

As the holder of the National Collection of Fruit, Brogdale has 500 varieties of pear, 350 of plum, 220 cherry and various currants, gooseberries, meddlers, quinces, cob nuts, strawberries and vines. Anything you buy, from the fruit trees to the unusual preserves (for instance Raspberry Cord £2, 12oz/300g), helps to maintain this part of our heritage, which nearly closed in the 1980s for lack of funding.

The Brogdale Horticultural Trust, Brogdale Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 8XZ celebrates apples on October 19-21, 9.30am-5pm. £2.50, concessions £2, children £1.50.

Brogdale will arrange mail order for large orders of fruit or fruit trees. Contact Gerry Oughton at the above address.

For an information sheet about events nationwide for Apple Day on October 21, write to Common Ground, 44 Earlham Street, London WC2H 9LA, preferably with a stamped, addressed envelope.

For the Ritz bookings call 0171-493 8181.



An apple picker harvests one of the 2,300 different varieties of the fruit at Brogdale Horticultural Trust in Kent

Bigger, not best

IN SOME circles at this time of year the My Marrow's Bigger Than Yours syndrome is rife (I hear of a cabbage in Gloucestershire that measures 5½ ft). In others, Lucia and Mapp-style My Plant's Rarer Than Yours one-upmanship rages. I'm never very

convinced by either: vast vegetables tend to taste revolting and rare plants are sometimes rare for a good reason.

The National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) fairs usually have a range of unusual plants, often at better prices than garden centres.

Botany day

BRITAIN'S oldest botanic garden, at Oxford, is offering autumn courses. They will be

held in the garden, on the banks of the Isis beside Magdalen Bridge. The courses will be run by garden writers, broadcasters and tutors from the Conservation of Plants and Gardens, including the Horti Praefectus, Timothy Walker, who is in charge of the gardens.

The next study day focuses on the winter garden and should include a mention of one of the garden's ferns, *Polypodium vulgare*, whose deep green fronds shimmer with frost on cold winter days.

More information can be obtained from Louise Allen, University of Oxford Botanic Garden, Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AX (01865-270000). Study days cost £25, including a sandwich lunch. Evening lectures cost £6, with wine.

Sore knees

STUFF a hotwater bottle full of old tights and use it as a kneeler. This gem comes from Pippa Greenwood's *Gardening Hints & Tips*.

Green — or brown — fingers are held gently but firmly throughout as clear explanations backed up with even clearer photographs tell us how to do everything from pruning to planting. The text and ideas are great. Pity about the presentation. For the hard-of-thinking there is a photograph of a pair of scissors.

Pippa Greenwood's *Gardening Hints & Tips* is published by Dorling Kindersley at £12.99.

Plant fair

TOMORROW the East Midlands Group of the NCCPG holds its first autumn plant fair at Selley Priory, Underwood, Notts from noon-4pm. Twenty-four nurseries will have stalls, although I doubt they will have anything as wild as a 5½ ft span cabbage.

To get to Selley Priory take the A17 off the M1 and turn west on the A608, for half a mile. The £1.50 entrance fee includes a visit to the garden. For information contact John Gregory on 01636 525460.



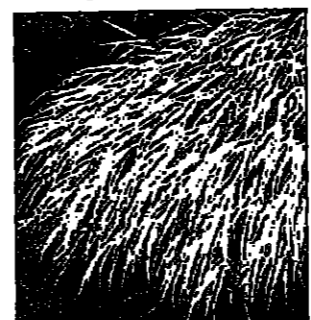
In some circles narrows bring out one-upmanship

PLANT OF THE MONTH

LAWNS are a luxury for those with plenty of time and their own water source but, curiously, it is grass which is taking the place of lawn — specialist grasses which, once established, thrive with little or no water and maintenance and are best planted through a thick layer of gravel or shingle to cut down weeding.

For a failsafe system a layer of black polythene, or any other weed-suppressing membrane available at garden centres, should be laid first with the shingle on top, and the grasses planted through holes in the polythene. *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola' is a Japanese grass that makes a stunning display with bright yellow gently arching leaves giving colour until the frosts.

It has three drawbacks: it is deciduous; when it reaches maturity — up to 45cm —



Hakonechloa: a specialist grass to replace lawn

some of the leaves bend slightly instead of arching, and nurseries have not been able to keep up with demand. So here is an alternative: *Acorus gramineus* 'Ogon', a perennial which forms a clump of long leathery leaves and green variegated leaves and will tolerate a wide range of conditions. It has many of the good qualities of grass, without being a member of the family.

PW Plants, a nursery with a good selection of ornamental grasses, sells them for about £4 a pot. The address is PW Plants, Heath Road, Kenninghall, Norfolk NR16 2DS (01953 88212).

FIND OF THE MONTH

I AM on the search for garden implements, high and low-tech, which should be more widely used. Last Christmas my aunt gave me a Kirpi, which is marketed as "the ultimate weeding tool". Having hacked, scraped, sawn and grubbed my way around weeds stuck in the heavy clay of London and Oxfordshire I can vouch for it.

The inner blade of the half-moon shape is serrated for cutting through stubborn stems, and a fierce blade at the top of the outer edge hoes weeds effortlessly. The tip of the crescent digs out tap roots. Kirpis can be bought for £9.80, including postage, from Earthworks Trading, A Ashmole, 5 Sciennes, Edinburgh EH9 1NH.

GARDEN ANSWERS



STEPHEN ANDERTON replies to readers' letters

Q My climbing *Hydrangea petiolaris* is more than 20 years old and grows outwards to 3ft deep, encroaching over the path to the front door. Can I prune it so that it will lie flatter but still produce flowers? — Mrs P. Smith, Loughborough, Leicestershire.

A Prune it back with a saw in March to the vertical stems attached to the wall. Feed it well. New shoots will clothe the structure over the year, and flowering should start again the next year.

Q We have a beautiful weeping ash. In spring there are snowdrops and all colours of crocuses under the branches. What could we grow in summer, and when should we feed or mulch the tree? — Mrs J. Bassil, Wiltshire, Cheshire.

A So long as the tree is happy and healthy, there is no need to feed it. However, its roots are greedy and will be close to the surface, which will reduce competition from either weeds or plants you wish to grow there. If you want to grow much, you will need to mulch regularly with old compost, manure, and/or a general fertiliser. Drought will be your biggest problem, and this is why the most successful plants will be spring woodlanders which expect dry shade in summer. Why not take the season right through with bulbs. At the height of summer herbaceous colour in deep, rooty shade, is difficult to achieve. Would an urn of white busy lizzies suffice?

Q I have been told that the bracken I have in my garden (one from) can cause cancer. Is this so? — J. Hopkins, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex.

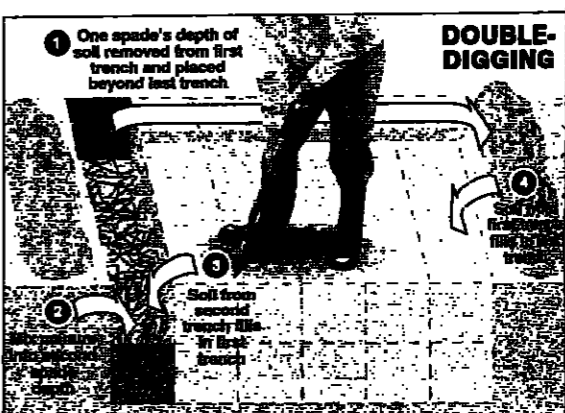
A There is some evidence that the spores of bracken are carcinogenic, and if bracken has appeared in your garden, then there must be more nearby. Remove your frond if it worries you, but what about the rest pumping out spores every summer? What is a reasonable risk?

Q I have moved recently from a most productive garden to a flat overlooking the sea with a 50ft-long balcony. I am shocked to find how little will survive the salt wind. Geraniums and begonias survive but evergreens get scorched. — Mrs J. Sharp, Bournemouth, Dorset.

A Wild and salty it may be (what a recipe for retirement), but it will also be relatively mild so close to the sea. Use hebes, oleas, phormiums, yucca, and cordylines. I would also make the most of succulents such as tubs full of the elephantine *Agave americana* and baskets of trailing *Lamproanthus* and *Carpobrotus*. Make the most of geraniums.

● Readers wishing to have their gardening problems answered should write to: Garden Answers, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington St, London E1 9XN. We regret that few personal answers can be given and that it may not be possible to deal with every request. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. The Times also regrets that enclosures accompanying letters cannot be returned.

Weekend tips



- Begin digging and manuring vacant parts of the vegetable garden (see above) and apply lime where necessary.
- Lift gladioli when they turn yellow, cut off stems, dry the corms, rub clean, label varieties and store.
- Stop damping down greenhouses, but keep ventilation generous in dry, sunny weather.
- Continue potting spring bulbs for a staggered indoor display. Dry off lilies and hippeastrums in their pots.

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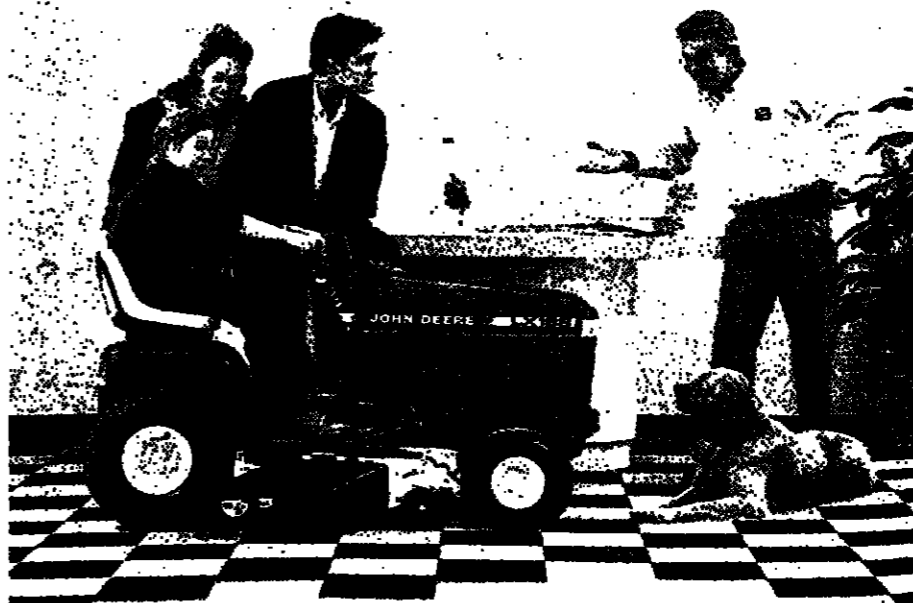
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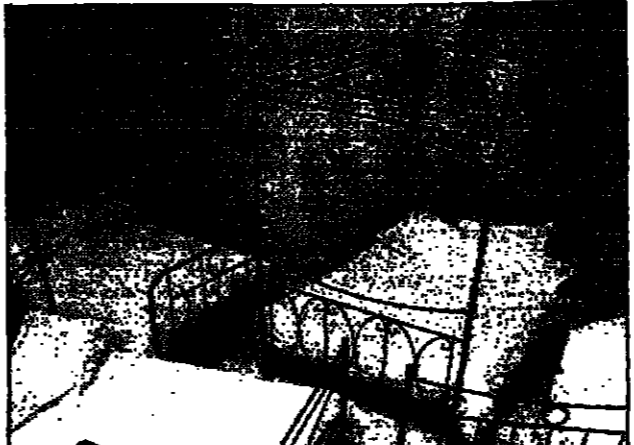
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SHOPPING

7

Doug Sager explains how snowboarders can achieve the coolest looks on the slopes – even as beginners

Beauty and the piste



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snow goggles, with black iridium lens, £76.
B13 Universe jacket in red and white, £245.95.
Quicksilver Levis Revenge pants, £179.99.
Quicksilver ski gloves, £96.99.
Vans Lemming snowboard boots, £140.
Burton Rippy 54 snowboard, £449.95,
plus Burton Custom Freestyle bindings, £135.95

LEFT
B13 two-striped Beanie in white, £22.95.
Kirk's Celine sunglasses, £100.
B13 Universe 4/2 women's jacket in
white and Rose twill, £245.95.
B13 Bioblend Women's Vent Pant
in Rose Twill, £155.95.
Burton Fader boot, £139.95.
Burton Dunn 44, £449.95, plus
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RIGHT
B13 Pong Beanie in red, £22.95.
Kirk's Celine sunglasses, £100.
Chromaphobia 55 Degree jacket, £259.
Chromaphobia mountain pant, £189.
Vans Lemming snowboard boots, £140.
K2 Freestyle binding, £129.95.
K2 Zeppelin snowboard, £400.

Real snowboarders groaned when the Prince of Wales and Prince Harry took to the boards in Klosters last winter. What geeks! They actually wore ski boots in hard snowboard bindings. Everybody knows there are only four people in Britain who wear hard snowboard boots. And nobody wears ski boots for snowboarding.

Snowboard instructors derided their antics, noting the danger ski boots pose to lower limbs when forced into bindings they are not designed for. But snowboarders don't care about that. They just cringed at how uncool the Princes were.

It's not easy to know what's in and what's out in snowboarding. Baggy clothing went out more than a year ago, but some shops are still trying to sell it. I discovered the other day that among serious snowboarders in California, there is no worse sin than ... in-line skating. And how that adults threaten to take over the sport, buying advice becomes more crucial than ever.

I've counted more than 326 snowboard manufacturers. Technical innovations are proliferating like retro-viruses. Some of the newest ideas haven't yet been proven in practice. In the choice of gear below, I've tried to pick the best hardware for beginners and the highest performance rides for both freestylers and freeriders.

Adult learners who buy from the list below can rest assured that when their kids laugh at them on slopes it won't be because of what they're riding.

BOARDS

Want to go for the long board for sticking those big drops, but don't want to lose spin characteristics with a monster heavy blade? Burton's Supermodels (£430-£460) are made of new ultra-lightweight materials for one of the best all-around rides anywhere on the mountain. If you can't get enough of the halfpipe, Burton's Customs (£430) remain some of the best freestyle boards. Among the Burton Pro Board range (£450), the Jim Rippy 154 was most in demand last season, but the Terje Balance 150 is possibly even more impressive in its "do everything" performance.

Ever crashed because your feet overhang the board? K2's Fat Bob (£390) boards are made for Bigfoot. The new

Zeppelin (£400) is the best board K2 has ever made. It features visible torsion forks in the top sheet to allow a softer nose for mega air. Less technical but total sellouts last year are the value boards from Plenk. The Jib sells for less than £200, and Plenk's kids' boards give ample performance for under £150.

BINDINGS AND BOOTS

This is the year of step-in bindings. As anyone over ten who has tried snowboarding can attest, bending over to strap up conventional bindings is a serious pain in the lower back. Boot-binding systems like the Switch Autolock (£135) click into place with authority, but only work with Switch boots sold with the appropriate cleats built into boot soles. Now Flow has come up with a step-in system that will work with any soft boot. The Flow F11 (£130) is tipped to be the bestselling binding in the UK this year, and the Flow doesn't jam up with snow the way click-in designs can.

Back to basics with conventional strap-in soft boot bindings, Burton's Custom Freestyle (£140) is top for the lightest, most secure grip. Youngsters get full performance from Dynatec's Junior Binding (£70). As bindings become less constricting, boots are increasingly reinforced, a good example being the NorthWave Lamm (£190), which has an inner-boot like a ski boot liner. Looks aside, Burton Freecarve (£225) gives the ultimate in reinforcement for freecarving. They say it's comfortable to walk in, but it looks like a ski boot to me. Best-looking boot on the market has to be Flow's Swell Boot (£180). It has phenomenal heel retention, looks like a high-top basketball shoe, and is built for cliffs and carving.

CLOTHING

I like a company, which says what it means. And what I would most like to be wearing this winter is Chromaphobia, in black and white. The 55 Degree Jacket (£259) and Mountain Pant (£189) are worthy of their Canadian heritage. This is tough, technical clothing with an unbelievable two-year guarantee. It's impossible to go wrong with Quicksilver – who else would have come up with Levis Revenge (£189), waterproof, breathable snowpant de-

signed to look like jeans. Quicksilver's Original Sin Jacket £259 is loaded with technical features and one of the best-looking garments.

Women will want to check out Kurvz, American gear designed by women snowboarders and the Prom line, from Swag. Swag's Ladies Luna Jacket (£109) is full featured, but very reasonable in price. Kurvz's Dianna Tech Jacket (£196) is as functional as the name suggests, and with the Dianna Tech Bib Pant (£196) featuring a "rear bathroom zipper for quick use", really makes a go-anywhere outfit.

ACCESSORIES

Snowboarders who feel the cold should consider the Thaw

Snowboard Longjohn (£29). Aside from the cool colours – bulldozer, demon and gun dog – the knees are padded with extra material. Look at any snowboarder's gloves and you'll see why they call us "shredders". Columbia's basic snowboard glove (£40) has reinforced fingers and a watertight, breathable shell, a lot of glove for the money. Burton's Universe Glove (£60) is more expensive, the palm area is reinforced.

Snowboarders do suffer from loose screws. To keep them tight, carry Totem's stash boxes of Torx counter-sunk and cylinderhead screws (£6 each). Don't forget the Totem Claw (£20), a chrome vanadium retractable knife plus spanner, and the Totem Dead Head multi-function screwdriver (£18).

It goes anywhere overland, down mountain pastures or the motorway, and it carves. (£250).

The Fishpaw: Great idea. On those days when the snow is heavy and wet, and spraying into your face, use the patented Swipeez rubber wiper built into the right thumb of Fishpaw's Yamada Pro snowboarder mitt (£75) to clean your goggles without smears.

The snowboard stopper: "Where are the brakes?" most beginners yell the first time they start sliding on a snowboard. The Sno-Motion Snow Brakes fit the back of a board and at the press of a button lower two blades into the snow, for "a controlled descent" (£200).

The ultimate snowboard: It had to happen. A 40mph snowboard that does jumps and runs for an hour on one litre of petrol. Invented by snowboarders from Florida, and now available in the UK, the Powerboard has to be ridden to be believed. The 4.6 horsepower two-stroke engine is controlled by a hand-held throttle, but no brakes (£1500).

NEW AND NEEDED

The MountainBoard: Snowboarders love living on the edge. Now you can indulge G-force addiction any time anywhere. The MountainBoard looks like being the biggest thing since hula hoops. It's a snowboard shape laid out on a longitudinal axle with twin rubber spring-mounted wheels fore and aft. "Another way to kill yourself," says dad, so you know it's cool. It comes in four lengths, adapts to hard or soft bindings and can be customised with harder springs and four types of tyres.

THE GOOD HOUSE GUIDE FOR FIRST-TIME BUYERS
Page 11

WHERE TO STOCK UP FOR THE SLOPES



Burton Supermodel 62 snowboard, £435.95, plus Burton freestyle binding, £109.95

■ Burton, 01784 251 000; Chromaphobia 01932 570070; Columbia, 01749 686808; Dynatec, 01782 541554; Fishpaw, 01224 869433; Flow, 0115 9731001; K2, 0161 4281178; Kurvz, 01932 570070; MountainBoard 001 719 447 1271; NorthWave, 0171-360 6666; Oakley, 01462 475475; Plenk, 01932 570070; Powerboard, 0164 743 3591;

Quicksilver, 01908 615123; Snow Motion, 001 707 745 0320; Swag, 0161-428 1178; Switch, 01925 757999; Thaw, 0181-236 0277; Totem, 0115-973 1001.

■ Items marked * are also available from the Snow and Rock Boarded Up mail-order catalogue (01932 569569).

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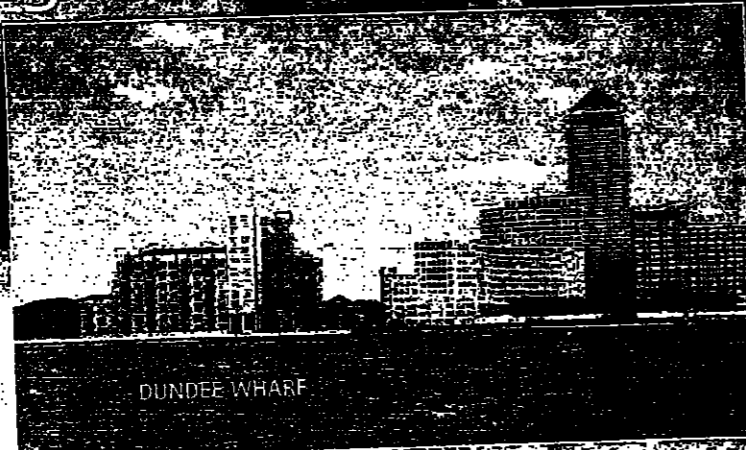
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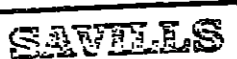
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LOS BALCONES

DE VALDERRAMA

Special deals and a buoyant market are tempting a new generation of homeowners

First-time buyers back on the scene

Low interest rates, affordable house prices and falling unemployment are encouraging first-time buyers to get a foothold on the home-ownership ladder.

With so many people stuck in the negative equity trap, many first-time buyers have waited up to six years, often staying with their parents, for signs that prices have stopped falling. But now, with evidence that the market is moving, they are house-hunting in earnest, taking advantage of special mortgage deals. These can slash monthly repayments for up to three years and provide "cashbacks" for furniture and legal fees.

The Halifax Building Society is even offering a guarantee to first-timers that protects against negative equity. If the home-owner decides to move between five and ten years after taking out the mortgage and is in negative equity, the Halifax will sell the property and fully repay the mortgage.

The new generation of first-time buyers are older — most are in their late twenties — and many have a sizeable financial cushion behind them. Most will not buy unless they are confident about job security, say building societies.

They are right to be cautious. New home owners who lose their jobs and cannot pay their mortgage get no help from the state for the first nine months. However, only one in five borrowers takes out payment protection insurance offered by lenders, often because they cannot afford the extra cost, according to the Council of Mortgage Lenders.

Barry Naisbitt, an economist with the Abbey National, says: "In 1982 more than one in three home-buyers were making their first purchase before the age of 24. Today, the number of young buyers is much lower. Uncertainty about jobs has held younger people back. Now that unemployment is falling and more

jobs are being created, they are more confident about buying their first home.

Few first-timers need 100 per cent mortgages, as was the case in the housing boom of the late 1980s, when many young buyers, hit by rising interest rates, found they had borrowed more than they could afford to pay back, leading to a flood of repossessions. These days most have saved a deposit of between 5 and 15 per cent.

They can afford to be more selective, bypassing new starter-homes, hard-to-sell studios and one-bedroom flats in favour of larger properties suitable for raising a family.

According to the TSB, the cost of buying a home is at its most affordable level since 1978. Its affordability index shows that a typical house-buyer in 1990 would spend £71.30 from each £100 of take-home pay for the average home loan. Now buyers spend just £25.40 on their mortgage out of every £100 he or she takes home. Estate agents believe that the shortage of well-located houses on the market in many areas is leading to increased competition and rising prices.

Hugh Dunsmore Hardy, chief executive of the National Association of Estate Agents, says: "First-time buyers are back, but their requirements have changed. They will often buy older houses in need of modernisation but are competing with those who have left the market and decided to move back in. That adds to the shortage of three-bedroom pre-1960 houses." According to the Council of Mortgage Lenders, the average price paid by first-time buyers nationwide is £45,000, which buys a new two-bedroom terraced house in Plymouth or a three-bedroom semi in Greater Manchester. In Greater London, the average is around



ILLUSTRATION: MATILDA HARRISON

£65,000, which provides a two-bedroom flat or a small terraced house in cheaper suburbs, such as Calford.

With favoured parts of central London showing price rises of almost 10 per cent in the past six months, many first-time buyers are having to compromise on area and location. Notting Hill, South Kensington, Fulham, Hampstead, Primrose Hill and Belsize Park are beyond the reach of

most young buyers. Hilary Wade of London estate agents Winkworth says: "Younger buyers want to be near smart shops and restaurants. Popular areas are Hackney and Stoke Newington, bordering Islington; North Kensington and Shepherd's Bush; neighbouring Notting Hill; Clerkenwell, close to Covent Garden, Soho and Islington."

CHERYL TAYLOR

Try to see your chosen location in all its different guises. A neighbourhood may seem very different at night, at weekends or during school holidays. Visit it at different times of the day or week to get a better idea of what it's like to live there.

Be wary of vacant land nearby. It might become the site for housing or an industrial development.

Look at practicalities. Most people will need to use public transport at some time. How far are you from the railway station, buses, shops, schools and health centres. Could you cope when the car is in for repair?

Find out if there are any potential sources of noise or air pollution nearby, such as major roads, rubbish dumps, railway lines, airports, pubs, school playgrounds, factories, dairies, quarries or goods yards.

Reduce conflict with neighbours. Opt for a house with space out of sight to repair a car.

Find out about car parking. Parking problems can contribute to road accidents, car theft and disputes between neighbours. There may not be enough space for two-car households and visitor parking, especially in streets of terraced housing or busy main roads.

Consider the layout of the property. A kitchen at the front of the house means you can't keep an eye on children in the back garden while you are washing up.

TIPS: MAKE SURE YOU...



Open-plan living can make small homes seem spacious, but may not suit families with teenagers who want privacy. Separate living and dining rooms mean different activities can go on at the same time, but rooms can be small and dark. Integral garages and hallways sometimes produce L-shaped rooms which are difficult to furnish. If the only way out is through the living room, it could be messy to take out the rubbish.

Check that the property is safe. Avoid winding stairs and tapering treads. Closely spaced banisters will stop children slipping through. Windows should have locks to prevent small children falling out and burglars breaking in. Is there space in the kitchen to rest hot pans? The kitchen door should be well away from the cooker. Badly installed or poorly maintained boilers can produce poisonous gas — stained or

damaged appliances and a smell of fumes are warning signs.

Get your surveyor to check if the property has been rewired in the past 15 years. There should be circuit breakers at mains supply and enough electrical sockets to avoid trailing wires around.

Ask to see fuel bills. A well-insulated property will cost less to heat, but it must have good ventilation to prevent condensation. Front doors leading directly into living rooms, large areas of north-facing single-glazed windows and conservatories that cannot be separated from other rooms in the winter all put up heating bills.

Take account of daylight. North-facing windows receive no direct sunlight. Shallow rooms are more likely to be well lit than deep narrow ones.

Check the garden. Steeply sloping gardens lack direct sunlight. Large trees close to the house can cause subsidence.

Establish whether there is a long-term management structure in place. If you are buying a house or flat on a lease. Ideally, each owner will be given a share in the management company who will ultimately own the freehold and control service charges.

Glass. Houses backing onto open ground, railway embankments, woods and footpaths, all make it easier for thieves to break in. Many insurers insist on window locks and extra door locks.

Buy a house or flat on a busy road if you have young children and there is not a secure space for them to play.

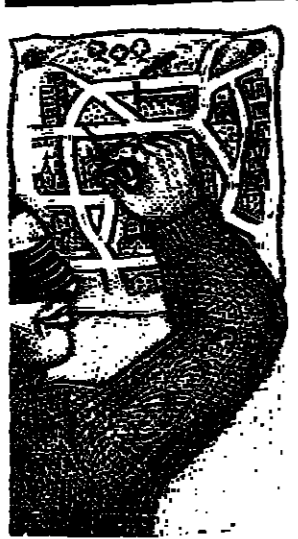
Buy a property in need of modernisation if you don't want to spend your leisure time doing it up, and you can't afford to pay a builder to do the work. People tend to underestimate the work and cost involved in making an old house habitable.

Buy a flat in an old building, if you are worried

about noise. Noise is worse in flat conversions, with poor sound insulation. Noise from common facilities and upstairs flats can be a nuisance. Make sure bedrooms and living rooms are away from shared entrances, corridors, lifts and rubbish chutes.

Buy a house with a large garden if you don't want to spend weekends pulling up weeds and mowing the lawn.

Buy a flat without finding out about service charges and how they are assessed. Is there a sinking fund contribution towards future repair works and redecoration of common parts? If not you could be faced with high demands five years on.



WARNINGS: MAKE SURE YOU DON'T...

Buy a house or a flat without seeking professional advice. Take advice about the structural condition of the property you hope to buy before handing over the money. A home-buyers' report, which includes a condition survey and a valuation fee, costs between £250 and £500. If you are buying an older house a full structural survey is advisable. Engage an independent solicitor before you make an offer on a property.

Buy a property that will attract crime. Check that the position of porches, extensions, garages, balconies and drain pipes do not provide an easy climbing route for bur-

glars. Houses backing onto open ground, railway embankments, woods and footpaths, all make it easier for thieves to break in. Many insurers insist on window locks and extra door locks.

Buy a house or flat on a busy road if you have young children and there is not a secure space for them to play.

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The Old Rectory, Silk Willoughby, Grade II listed Georgian former rectory in formal walled gardens in the centre of the village. Seven bedrooms, two dressing rooms, two bathrooms, three reception rooms, study and kitchen/breakfast room. Range of outbuildings. About £215,000 (Savills, 01522 543691).

OXFORDSHIRE
The Old Rectory, Fiftield, Georgian former rectory in an acre of gardens with extensive views. Nine bedrooms, six bathrooms, shower-room, four reception rooms and domestic offices. Detached three-bedroom cottage, stone-built office/games room, garaging, outbuildings and heated swimming pool. About £295,000 (Jackson-Stops and Staff, 01893 822651).

EAST DEVON
The Old Rectory, Bickton, Grade II listed Queen Anne. Former rectory in elevated position overlooking its own 21.5 acres of parkland. Six bedrooms, four bathrooms (one ensuite), three reception rooms, study, kitchen/breakfast room and cellars. Two-bedroom staff cottage. Outbuildings, garaging, stabling. About £700,000 (Knight Frank, 01392 423111).

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Big rooms make pubs great places to live, with or without customers, as increasing numbers of buyers are finding out

A free house becomes home

This time last year John de Noia was working for a construction company in New York. Now he is the new host at the Wheatsheaf Inn at Titchfield in Hampshire. He bought the pub a few months ago with his wife Adrienne. "We wanted to work for ourselves," says Mr de Noia whose grandmother ran a bar in Manhattan for 30 years. The couple have two large bedrooms for their children, a smaller bedroom for themselves and a sitting room of about 16ft by 14ft. There is also a long function room which they are not yet sure what to do with. It may end up being converted into two bedrooms for bed and breakfast.

Mr de Noia says: "We looked at ten pubs but the appeal of this one was its age (about 200 years), its character and the fact that the garden was the right size and can hold six tables. We also wanted a place we could put our stamp on and we felt that this was it."

The De Noias are just two of the thousands of people who have bought into the pub trade over the years and are realistic about the work involved. For those who are not, caution is advised. "It's a hellishly hard occupation and standards are rising all the time. But the first thing to consider is what it will be like being with your partner for 24 hours a day," says Colin Wellstead, national public house director of Christie & Co which currently has about a thousand pubs all over the country on its books. Some 200 of those are disposals by the pub company Phoenix Inns.

Mr Wellstead places pubs into three price bands. Those at £50,000-£150,000 generally attract people who have never owned a pub before, he says, while those between £150,000-£300,000 tend to go to buyers who have already had experience of the licensed trade either as managers, tenants or



This pub was sold for under £90,000

owners. Most properties above £300,000 are sold to brewers and pub companies.

Adam Lansdown at the Edinburgh office of Robert Barry has seen successes and disappointment amongst those who buy into the trade. He says: "People still have a dream about pubs and I think there's a fair proportion of them who make a fantastic success out of running one. Those who might struggle are the ones who buy too small in terms of turnover — less than £80,000 a year — and don't have the support of a second income. They're not quite busy enough to have staff to help them, they can be tied seven days a week and they're working as well as running the business."

A number of pubs go to people for residential use (see case study) and according to David Tooley, chief reporter of *The Licensee and Morning Advertiser*, that can be a judicious way of buying a home.

In certain areas where property prices are high it's probably cheap-

er for people to get a pub and convert it than actually buying a house. The space is a big attraction as well, but be aware that some councils may object to a change of use because they see the pub as a community asset, he says. *The Licensee and Morning Advertiser*, one of the newspapers of the licensed trade, has a property section every Monday.

James Grimes at Fleurets in London says that a lot of work may have to be done to convince the planners that a change of use from pub to residential is desirable. Nevertheless, he says there is definitely a niche market developing here.

The buyers tend to have a pretty good idea about what to do with the buildings and they will end up with a home with lots of space, including a

basement, and usually plenty of character. The areas where this market is most noticeable are the up and coming parts of east London — Poplar, Clerkenwell and Hackney — where you can pick up pubs cheaper than in other areas of the capital. It's also happening in East Anglia where there seems to be an over supply of pubs, he says.

Fleurets has more than 400 pubs for sale in England and Wales ranging from £50,000 upwards. One place on the market, which Mr Grimes feels is a possible candidate for conversion is the thatched Duke's Head in Heath and Reach near Leighton Buzzard which comes with two bars, an inglenook fireplace, three double bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, garden and car park. The price is £140,000.

The Shergar at Peckham in south London is also on Fleurets' books. It is next to Victorian terraced houses and is priced at £128,000. The property has three bedrooms and a sitting room upstairs. Downstairs there is a bar, a games room and a kitchen. Sidney Phillips in Hereford is another company which specialises in the pub sales. Cur-



Julia Hember outside the Ship and Blue Ball pub in Shoreditch, east London, which she is converting into flats with her brothers

rently the firm has almost 1,000 pubs for sale, all over the country and most are in the £100,000-£250,000 price bracket. Eighty per cent are country pubs.

The Edinburgh office of Robert Barry has 24 pubs for sale in Scotland and the north of England including a village pub near Ayr with a 250-seater function room and six bedrooms, all with showers or bathrooms. The asking price is £200,000.

CHRISTIAN DYMOND

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● Sidney Phillips 01981 250333.
● Robert Barry & Co (Edinburgh)
office 0131 225 2944.
● The Licensee and Morning
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JULIA HEMBER will be celebrating Christmas in her own pub. By then the builders should have finished converting the Ship and Blue Ball in Shoreditch, London, into three flats with a photographic studio in the bar and a graphic design studio in the cellar.

Pubs were at the top of her list when Miss Hember, a freelance photographer, started looking for new living and work space. With the help of her father, Paul, she went to Christie & Co, specialists in the field of pub sales. They looked at eight properties.

"For the amount of space you get they're very good value. If there's accommodation upstairs

ROOM AT THE INN

pubs are not that difficult to convert," she says. Her venture is a joint one with brothers Simon, Marcus and Miles.

The cost was just under the asking price of £90,000 and Paul Hember thinks another £50,000 will be needed for conversion.

This for a four-storey property (plus basement) with 700sq ft of space on each floor, a stone's throw from the City and nestled within a creative community. The Hembers got planning permission for the conversion before buying. "It's a Victorian pub with

arched windows and tiles on the

outside. We're keeping those but removing fittings from the bar because they're not wonderful. Then we'll cut an area out of the bar floor so you can see into the basement," says Miss Hember.

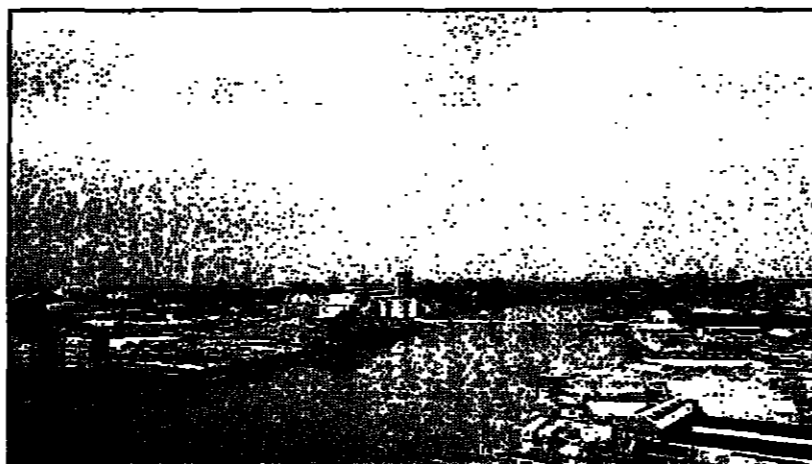
The old bar has a 13ft high ceiling and plenty of light. Access to the basement will be by a Victorian cast iron spiral staircase bought from an architectural restoration firm.

The three flats will each have two bedrooms, a sitting room, kitchen and bathroom. They will be reached by a different entrance from the studios. Two of the flats will be rented out. "I think this is a pretty good investment," Miss Hember says.

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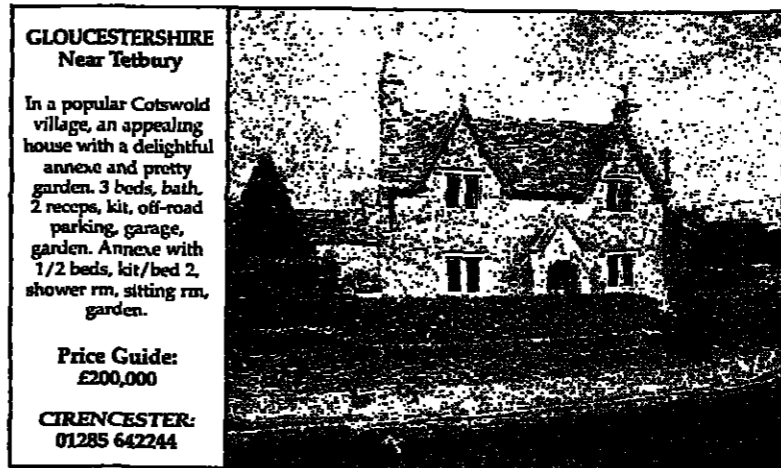
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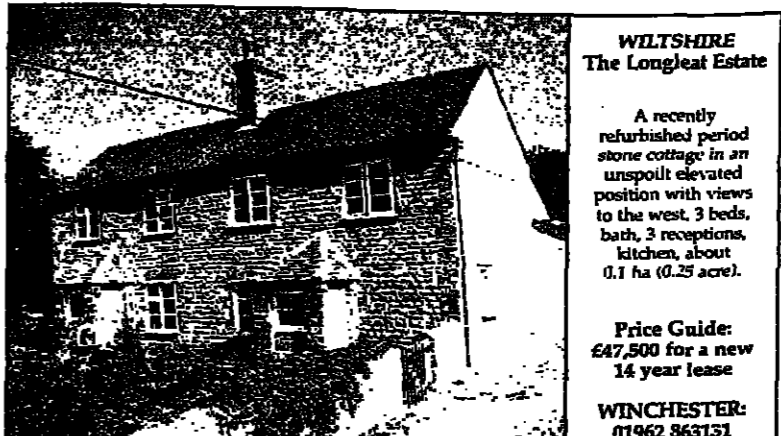
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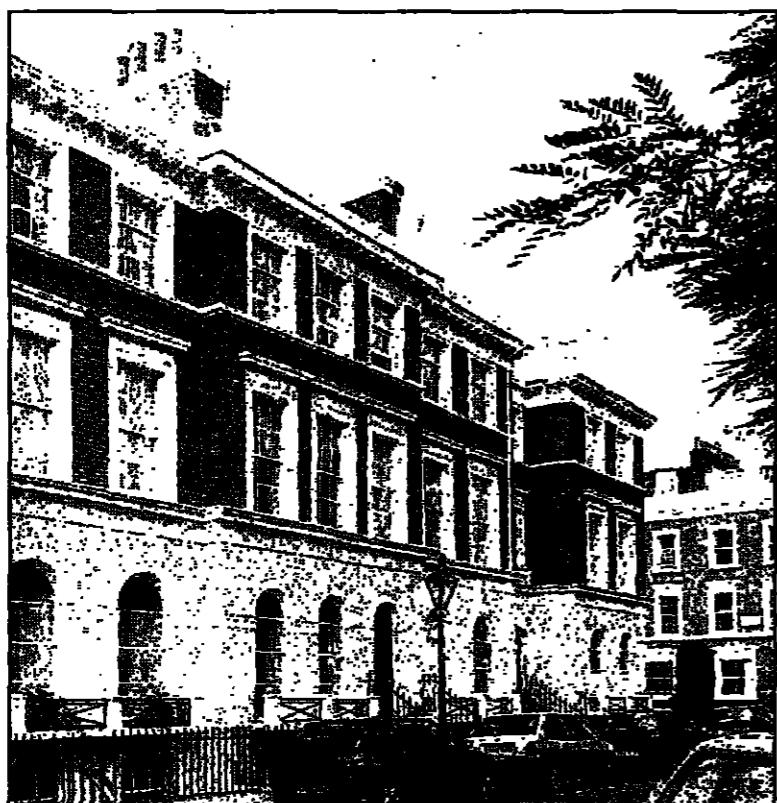
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An outstanding garden maisonette renovated to a high standard, at the rear of a period building. 3 beds, 2 baths, shower, clk, 2 receps, conserv, kit, caretaker, private gdn, comm gdn.
RUSSELL SIMPSON: 0171-225 0277 JOHN D WOOD & CO: 0171-352 1484



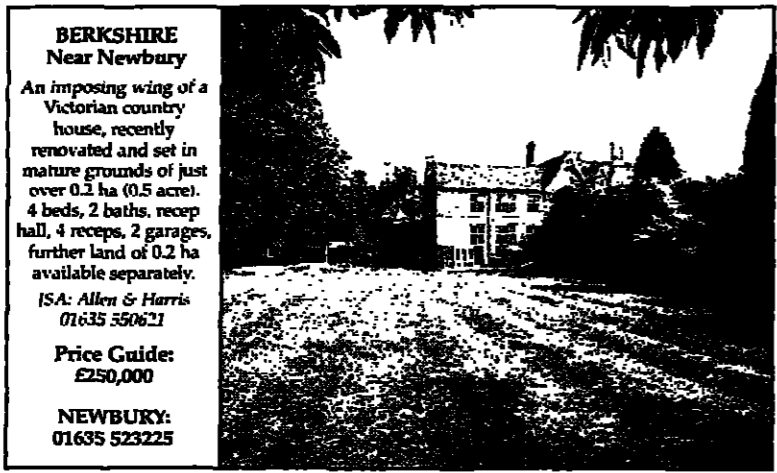
GLoucestershire Near Tetbury
In a popular Cotswold village, an appealing house with a delightful annex and pretty garden. 3 beds, bath, 2 receps, kit, off-road parking, garage, garden. Annex with 1/2 beds, kit/bed 2, shower rm, sitting rm, garden.
Price Guide: £200,000
CIRENCESTER: 01285 642244



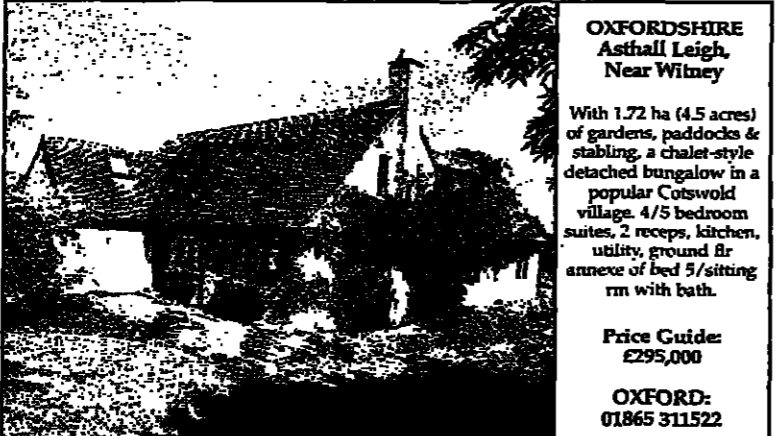
WILTshire The Longleat Estate
A recently refurbished period stone cottage in an unspoilt elevated position with views to the west. 3 beds, bath, 3 receptions, kitchen, about 0.1 ha (0.25 acre).
Price Guide: £47,500 for a new 16 year lease
WINCHESTER: 01962 863131



ST JAMES'S GARDENS, W11 Freehold £985,000
A charming Victorian house overlooking the communal square gardens. 5 beds, 2 baths, 2 receptions, kit/family rm, utility rm, 2 clrms, west facing terrace, 15.4m (50ft) garden.
JOHN WILCOX & CO: 0171-602 2352 JOHN D WOOD & CO: 0171-727 0705



BERKSHIRE Near Newbury
An imposing wing of a Victorian country house, recently renovated and set in mature grounds of just over 0.3 ha (0.5 acre). 4 beds, 2 baths, recep hall, 4 receps, 2 garages, further land of 0.2 ha available separately.
ISA: Allen & Harris 01635 350621
Price Guide: £250,000
NEWBURY: 01635 523225



OXFORDSHIRE Asthall Leigh, Near Witney
With 1.72 ha (4.5 acres) of gardens, paddocks & stabling, a chalet-style detached bungalow in a popular Cotswold village. 4/5 bedroom suites, 2 receps, kitchen, utility, ground flr annex of bed 5/sitting rm with bath.
Price Guide: £295,000
OXFORD: 01865 311522

— — — — —

Through a test-tube, darkly

Gill Hornby hears the case in fiction against the modern miracle of in-vitro fertilisation

I HAD a certain image of Jane Asher, actress, master-baker, perfect wife and mother: squeaky-clean, wholesome, elegant and poised. And I had similar expectations of an Asher novel: squeaky-clean, wholesome, etc. — and, surely, it would have an Aga or two. So it is a little surprising to find the first scene is a description of male masturbation. Is she another A.A. Gill? Are neophilia and bestiality about to follow?

Well, no. This masturbation is actually as respectable and middle-class as masturbation can be. Michael — the masturbator — is in a fertility clinic in Harley Street, trying to come up with a specimen in a test-tube, while Juliet, his wife, is having her eggs removed upstairs. After years of childlessness, the Evanses are starting in-vitro fertilisation treatment.

IVF has brought hope, and, indeed, children, to thousands of unlucky couples: it is a modern miracle. But Asher is not looking on the bright side. Her novel is a powerful exception not only of the pressures of infertility on an outwardly

■ **THE LONGING**
By Jane Asher
HarperCollins, £14.99
ISBN 0 00 225019 5



Asher: moral concerns

perfect couple, but also the pressures of fertility treatment on the psyche. The most important passage in the book is the description of the doctor introducing Michael's sperm to Juliet's egg: "All one had to do was to choose and join up the components in a glorious pick'n'mix and then stand back and watch the miracle of creation take place." And that

confusion between the role of man and that of deity has a disastrous impact.

Juliet gradually loses her faith in everything — husband, marriage, future — and replaces it with a demented and hysterical attachment to the doctor who is treating her. It begins with her enjoying her internal examinations. Soon, she is round at his home throwing out his girlfriend. And then, with the final descent into madness, she steals another woman's baby from a pram and disappears.

IVF is now a subject of such importance to so many that it is time it made its way into fiction. This thought-provoking, polished and professional first novel is definitely a presentation of the case against.

The ignorant objections of Juliet's mother are obviously meant to be comic ("Test-tubes — there certainly wasn't anything like that in my day"). Jane Asher's real concern is for the moral haziness that surrounds the issue. And from one couple's hopeful trip to a smart clinic, she spins a modern tale of gothic horror.

From the origins of signs to the Army recruitment office

RICHLY presented, *The Illustrated Book of Signs & Symbols* by Miranda Bruce Mifford (Dorling Kindersley, £14.99 ISBN 0 7513 5428 7) is irresistible to anyone interested in mysterious and meaningful symbols. Listing thousands of historical and cultural signs, this fascinating book records their origins in art, religion, literature and psychology with helpful cross-referencing. Here, the single rose is identified not so much as the emblem of passionate love or the Labour party, but a sign that all confidences are to be held secret, hence the central ceiling rose of Victorian architecture.

Stark social realism has been the trademark of Theresa Breslin's previous novels. *Death Or Glory Boys* (Methuen £11.99, ISBN 0 416 19346 3) tackles issues of war and peace while reading like a thriller. Our shopping with giggling friends when a terrorist blows up a nearby shop, Sarah attends an Army careers lecture and, much to the horror of pacifist friend, Phil, joins the Officer Cadet Corps.

With Cal, the terrorist, planning more bombings and the cadets placed on standby, one marvels at Sarah's capacity to quote First World War poets while debating the modern army's peacekeeping role and delivering skippable recruitment-style lectures. "Glow" by

Clash of symbols, a bang on the drum



King-Smith: wildlife battle

the way is cadet slang for "good-looking or what?"

For generations of young children, Dick King-Smith's well informed affinity with animals and nature has been a boon. In *Godhanger* (Doubleday £9.99, ISBN 0 385 407785), he writes for older readers, allowing scope for a relatively

unsentimentalised wildlife story. The shooting of a doe rabbit, whose "warm innards... wriggled and slid uselessly" into the brambles, sets the scene in hard focus as the brutal forces of rural conservation, represented by a rogue gamekeeper, are set against the articulated concerns of a huge, alert and mysterious bird who leads the beleaguered wildlife in a deadly battle for survival. Like Jack London's *Call of the Wild*, *Godhanger*, with its classical wood engravings by Andrew Davidson, has the genuine stamp of animal biography.

The icy aura of bizarre and threatening peril that hung about the works of Mervyn Peake has never quite been equalled. Based on *Titus Groan* from the *Gormenghast* trilogy, his story *Boy In Darkness* (Hodder £9.99, ISBN 0 340 68323 6), opens with Titus at 14, "in need of hateful things" and escaping his primordial home for "one tremendous day of insurrection".

What he encounters — a subterranean level ruled over by the blind and deceptively gentle Lamb who ritually "re-adjusts" humans into half beasts — will give this generation of horror fans a glimpse of what they could be missing. It is called *eloquence*, and Peake, who died in 1968, had it.

MAUREEN OWEN

Richard Stott on the horse-whisperer to the royals



Out for a stroll and a chat: Monty Roberts with one of the Queen's horses at Windsor

IF ONLY the Queen had heard of Monty Roberts earlier, how different the lives of our own dear Royal Family might have been.

Roberts is a horse whisperer, a trainer who breaks in young colts and fillies, persuading them to accept saddle, bridle, bit and rider. He does this by speaking their language. No nastiness, no pain, no halbers. Just learn to speak Horse. The Queen heard of Roberts in 1988 and invited him to Windsor to break (Roberts hates the word) some of her wayward youngsters. She should not have stopped at the horses.

Roberts learnt Horse, or "Equus" as he calls it, by studying wild mustangs in Nevada, and seeing how an elderly mare dealt with a troublesome young male. In a complex ritual of body language he discovered how to win the trust and eventual acquiescence of the most troublesome young thing.

THIS raw, harrowing collection of stories is the first offering from Rebel Inc, a new imprint specialising in new Scottish writing and in reprints of underground classics.

The stories share a family resemblance. They are set principally in shadowy, depressed areas of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The characters are mostly young and are either unemployed or locked into a debilitating cycle of self-abuse. Drugs, football, depraved sex and pop music offer temporary respite from lives of diminished horizons and defeated purpose.

In Gordon Legge's poignant *Pop*

Talking horse sense

■ **THE MAN WHO LISTENS TO HORSES**
By Monty Roberts
Hutchinson, £16.99
ISBN 0 09 180206 7

Now it does not take a genius to see the ironies for our own matriarch here. If only she had learnt "Diana" or "Fergie", she could have taught them to be part of her herd, to accept the rein and bridle, to accept coaxing.

Roberts, a former rodeo rider from California, was brought up by a thug of a father who broke horses in the traditional, brutal way. He rebelled against these

methods and was soundly beaten for doing so. His life has been a constant battle to convince people that his methods really work and this book contains some wonderful vignettes of his adventures along the way.

The final picture of the Queen is her sitting alone at a table set for two in the middle of a vast lawn at Windsor Castle. Snaking away from the table was a long white cable. When Roberts arrived, the Queen pressed a button at the end of the cable and tea was served.

Did she, in this splendid isolation, think of asking him about daughter-in-law whispering? Roberts, would have had the answer. As he says: "We all want the well-behaved, happy horse at the conclusion. The horse should not be traumatised and should elect to stay with you rather than go away."

A must for all also-rans in the Queen Elizabeth Stakes.

Scotland the depraved

■ **CHILDREN OF ALBION**
Rebel Inc, £8.99
ISBN 0 862 41626 4

Life, for instance, three former friends hold monthly meetings to discuss their favourite pop records. When one of them is injured in an industrial accident, they unhappily realise that their meetings were really a doomed attempt to recapture the elusive rhythms of their late adolescence.

In Alan Warner's *After the Vision*, the means of escape from drab reality for three young crematorium assistants is not music but drugs. In other stories it is deviance or sexual humiliation.

If there is a problem, it is that these writers are not rebellious enough; at least, they confuse unconventional subject matter with genuine mould-breaking experimentation and they seldom take risks with form.

Irvine Welsh's *The Rosewell Incident* is typical of the collection: indeed Welsh is the archetypal new Scottish writer, whose originality and power as a vernacular stylist is matched only by his unremitting desire to shock.

His story opens with two linked atrocities: a hammer is smashed into a youth's skull and a bored garage attendant has sex with two underage girls. Yet what at first seems mere self-indulgence deepens into something rich and unexpected as an alien spacecraft lands in Edinburgh.

JASON COWLEY

Blocks off the old chip

THE night before I started reading *Children*, *Panorama* showed a heartbreaking exposé of one couple's hopeless efforts to shake off the shadows of their own childhood and learn to be better parents to their already doomed four-year-old son, Peter. No one who saw it could be in any doubt that parenting is, all too literally, a hit-and-miss affair.

So it was with a sense almost of déjà vu that I turned first to David Mamet's tiny story, *Soul Murder*, which offers a fleeting glimpse of a mother and her three children waiting at a station. She treats two of the children with love and gentleness, the third with coldness and harsh words, and induces an overwhelming sense of despair at being unable to intervene. It was a relief to turn next to Adam Mars-Jones's affectionate portrait of his mother in *Blind Bitter Happiness*, for here is a woman who overcame her own bleak childhood to be a fulfilled and loving parent.

Some contributions tend to the twee, and several are oddly tasteless, such as Blake Morrison's *Doctors* and Nurses or Susan Swan's *Sluts*.

■ **CHILDREN: Blind Bitter Happiness**
Granta, £7.99
ISBN 0 903141 02 7

In fact, this collection seems disproportionately sex-obsessed, so that a book which purports to evoke "what it was like to be that lost personality in a vanished time, a child serves sometimes to depress rather than uplift."

But there are plenty of compensations. In *Eternal Love*, Karen E. Bender courageously explores the anxieties of a loving mother who must come to terms with her backward daughter's marriage to an equally slow-witted man. And in *Arithmetic Town*, Todd McEwen climbs convincingly inside the skin of a boy struggling with his maths homework: "I started to get real mad and I also had to go to the bathroom but, if I opened the door, Dad would be on me like a German shepherd. Are you finished? ... Say, he'd think, let's just go into the kid's room and see if he's having any fun by mistake?" That's more like it.

SALLY BAKER

Heart and home

■ **THE BEND FOR HOME**
By Dermot Healy
Farrill, £14.99
ISBN 1 86046 081 X

DERMOT HEALY'S evocative work — part memoir and part writer's notebook — describes his childhood in Westmeath, where his father was a village policeman, and the family's subsequent move to a larger town, where Healy's mother and aunt ran a café and bakery. The narrative in these sections fluctuates between factual account and more elliptical, dreamlike passages, in which actual incidents are seen through the distorting glass of memory, or reconstituted as fiction.

The second half of the book describes the writer's return to his childhood home to care for his dying mother. She gives him a diary dating from 1962 — the year his father died — and he is able to revisit this half-forgotten period of his life, and relive the gauche but

sometimes passionate emotions of his formative years.

■ **STILL LIVES**
By Christopher Bigsby
Constable, £15.99
ISBN 0 09 476450 6

INSPIRED by the life of the American photographer, Lee Miller, Christopher Bigsby's novel offers a panoramic view of 20th-century history. London in the Blitz, France after the Liberation and the horrors of Buchenwald are all captured by his protagonist Sylvia Kayle's camera lens. Interspersed are episodes from Sylvia's personal life. Her troubled childhood in the Midwest is followed by a spell in Paris, and later by a posting to London, where she falls in love. Bigsby's rendering of these and the book's more famous events is sensitively done, but there are times when one feels he has stayed rather too close to the facts of his subject's life for the book to work as fiction, not reportage.

CHRISTINA KONING

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A Fine Balance by Rohinton Mistry (Faber) £16.99 £13.99

Alias Grace by Margaret Atwood (Bloomsbury) £16.99 £14.99

Every Man for Himself by Beryl Bainbridge (Duckworth) £14.99 £12.99

Last Orders by Graham Swift (Picador) £15.99 £13.99

Reading in the Dark by Seamus Deane (Cape) £18.99 £11.99

The Orchard on Fire by Shena Mackay (Heinemann) £12.99 £10.99

Offer only available until Oct 25 when the Booker Prize winner will be announced.

The Times Bestseller List

HARDBACKS

	No weeks on list	Last week's position	Weekly sales
1 LONGITUDE Dava Sobel (Fourth Estate, £12)	6	3	2,538
2 EVENING CLASS Maeve Binchy (Orion, £16.99)	1	1	2,029
3 DEATH IS NOW MY NEIGHBOUR Colin Dexter (Macmillan, £16.99)	0	0	1,468
4 TO THE HILT Dick Francis (Michael Joseph, £15.99)	3	2	1,149
5 DALGLISH: MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY Kenan Dalglish (Hodder, £16.99)	1	20	802
6 THE NIGEL LAWSON DIET BOOK Nigel Lawson (Michael Joseph, £12.99)	0	0	802
7 MY NAME ESCAPES ME Alec Guinness (Hamish Hamilton, £16)	1	13	746
8 GREAT CRAMMAY BOOK Jennie Maubois (Riverside, £12.99)	2	28	631
9 LETTERLAND ABC Richard Castles (Nelson, £8.99)	0	0	602
10 ICON Frederick Forsyth (Bantam, £16.99)	3	4	599
11 THE STORY OF BRITAIN Roy Strong (Hutchinson, £35)	1	10	568
12 THE BRANDED MAN Catherine Cookson (Bantam, £16.99)	3	11	513
13 DESPERATION Stephen King (Hodder, £16.99)	4	7	510
14 POPCORN Ben Elton (Simon & Schuster, £12.99)	10	14	503
15 FRIENDSHIP BOOK: 1997 Francis Gay (D. C. Thomson, £4.25)	0	0	463
16 GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS: 1997 (Guinness, £15.99)	0	0	462
17 ANTONIO CARLUCCIO'S ITALIAN FEAST Antonio Carluccio (BBC, £16.99)	1	6	455
18 INTEGRATED BUSINESS (Heinemann Education, £9.99)	0	0	452
19 THE MAN WHO LISTENS TO HORSES Monty Roberts (Hutchinson, £16.99)	0	0	421
20 THE BEANO BOOK: 1997 (D. C. Thomson, £4.99)	6	19	419

PAPERBACKS

	No weeks on list	Last week's position	Weekly sales
1 NOTES FROM A SMALL ISLAND Bill Bryson (Black Swan, £6.99)	9	1	2,664
2 CASTING OFF Elizabeth Jane Howard (Pan, £6.99)	0	0	2,653
3 THE OBSESSION Catherine Cookson (Corgi, £5.99)	3	5	1,894
4 WHIT Iain Banks (Abacus, £6.99)	2	2	1,584
5 THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE Marie-Thérèse Bougard (BBC, £10.99)	1	7	1,525
6 WINTER KING Bernard Cornwell (Penguin, £5.99)	3	3	1,461
7 FACON DE PARLER: PART 1 Angela Aries (Headway, £8.99)	1	16	1,440
8 THE HORSE WHISPERER Nicholas Evans (Corgi, £5.99)	18	4	1,423
9 MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR Laurie J. Mullins (Pitman, £22.95)	0	0	1,291
10 ESPAÑA VIVA Derek Uddley (BBC, £8.99)	1	11	1,196
11 DEUTSCH PLUS Reinhard Tenberg (BBC, £12.99)	1	14	1,095
12 THE HIGHWAY CODE Dept. of Transport (HMSO, £0.99)	11	10	1,070
13 BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MUSEUM Kate Atkinson (Black Swan, £6.99)	38	0	1,011
14 HIGH FIDELITY Nick Hornby (Indigo, £5.99)	26	6	1,006
15 GREEN MILE G: COFFEY ON THE MILE Stephen King (Penguin, £1.99)	4	8	1,004
16 HOPE Lena Deighton (HarperCollins, £5.99)	2	19	973
17 PASOS I: A FIRST COURSE IN SPANISH Rosa Maria Martín (Hodder, £10.99)	0	0	958
18 BEGINNING PSYCHOLOGY Malcolm Hardy (OUP, £8.99)	0	0	928
19 SOPHIE'S WORLD Jostein Gaarder (Phoenix, £6.99)	30	0	887
20 CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN Louis de Bernières (Minerva, £6.99)	0	0	881

This Times list monitored 41,845 titles representing high-street sales of £5.7 million during the week.

SUPPLIED BY WHITAKER BOOKTRACK (01420 545420)

Who reads Booker nominees?

WE WERE planning to publish this week the sales figures of books by the authors who appear on the Booker Prize shortlist. *Dervent May* writes. But when BookTrack came up with these figures for the week ending September 28, we found that in the 600 bookshops it monitors, only two of the shortlisted authors had sold any books at all among the top 5,000 titles of all kinds. These were Margaret Atwood and Beryl Bainbridge.

So we have decided to give (below) a chart of all the 18 authors on the previously announced long list whose books appeared in that BookTrack 5,000.

The Atwood and Bainbridge figures are included there, of course, but some long-listed authors who did not make it to the shortlist appear there too, notably Ben Elton with his novel *Popcorn*.

Atwood is obviously being widely read at the moment, with five paperback editions of earlier books by her showing up, as well as the new novel with which she could win the Booker

Prize, *Alias Grace*. She sold 368 copies of that in hardback in nine days, since it was only published on September 19.

Beryl Bainbridge's novel about the Titanic, *Every Man for Himself*, also got off to a quick start — it was published

on September 1 — but no earlier books by her appear on this sales list.

We checked with the bookshop chains of Waterstone's and Dillons, which are not included in the BookTrack chart, and they also report that Atwood has been leading

Bainbridge: quick start

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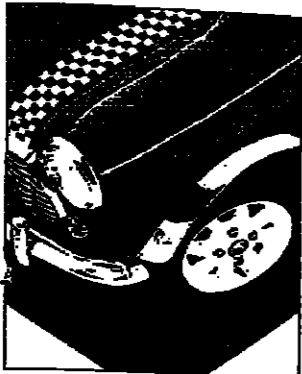
the field, with Bainbridge following close behind.

Both of them also say that Seamus Deane's first novel about Derry in the 1940s and 1950s, *Reading in the Dark*, is selling well. A relevant point here is that Waterstone's made it its September "Book of the Month".

The other three novels on the shortlist are *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry (Faber, £15.99), *Last Orders* by Graham Swift (Picador, £15.99) and *The Orchard on Fire* by Shena Mackay (Heinemann, £12.99). All of these were published much earlier in the year, and the bookshops point out that they all sold well when they first appeared. But it is the normal pattern for there to be a burst of hardback sales when a novel comes out, then a falling off until the paperback appears.

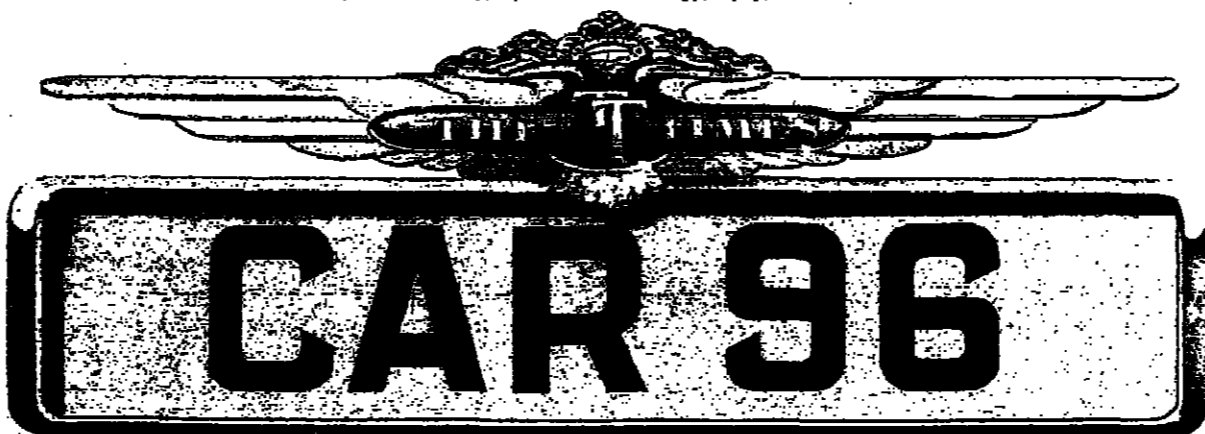
Will the publication of the shortlist start all these books selling? We shall ask BookTrack to monitor sales again in three weeks' time, just before the winner is chosen on October 29.





How the sports gear slows down a new Mini

Page 2



Cars you won't see at Britain's motor show

Page 3



SATURDAY OCTOBER 5 1996

JAGUAR'S XK8 ■ A CAR TO MATCH THE E-TYPE LEGEND: PAGE 5



The XK8 breaks the lap record at Pirelli's wet-weather track. Prototypes have endured a million miles of testing through Arctic wastes, over deserts and around thousands of high-speed laps at the Motor Industry Research Association

It beats Porsches — so very comfortably

The man in the Porsche was not happy, Kevin Eason writes. His foot was flat on the floor of the 911 Turbo, the tail swinging as he roared through the left-hander, leaving a massive spray of water.

But he couldn't go faster than Mike Cross, Jaguar's top chassis engineer had broken the lap record at Pirelli's wet-weather test track, and the man from Porsche was having a strop. He was driving one of the world's most acclaimed sports cars and Cross was in a sleek cruiser not supposed to charge round racetracks.

But the man from Porsche had underestimated the new Big Cat. It might have wood and leather and a stereo system capable of filling the Albert Hall, it might be long and elegant — but it could outmanoeuvre every other car tested at the Vizola track in Northern Italy.

It took a million miles of testing to create Jaguar's XK8, pounding through Arctic wastes, over desert roads in baking temperatures and through thousands of circuits around the top-secret high-speed bowl at the Motor Industry Research Association's centre at Nuneaton in Warwickshire.

I was the first British journalist to see the XK8, then in the last stages of testing as Cross threw the coupé around Vizola, hurtling through fountains of water on a surface like polished glass.

First impression was that XK8 was as long as the XJS it replaces, and the XJS was as nimble as a canal boat. How could Cross get up speed, never mind cope with a track covered in surface water, to test the stickability of the new Pirelli P6000 tyres to the limit? The XK8 seemed like an unlikely candidate for a lap record: it is a big, heavy rear-wheel-drive car which will be used mainly for touring in grand style.

Mike Cross is an understated type of guy, a quietly spoken west-Midlander who looks so relaxed, he could be motoring's Perry Como. Behind the wheel though, he is a class act, a driver so good that he is highly rated by Jackie Stewart, his sensitivity for a car so sharp that he has the last word. When you drive a Jag, you are driving a car tuned by Mike Cross.

For the XK8, the job was as tricky as it gets, balancing the ride to combine handling with comfort. "People who buy a Jaguar don't want their fillings shaking loose because the set-up is so hard for sporty driving, as you would find in an out-and-out sports car," he says. "But we have such a good power train in the car, we wanted XK8 to have a sporty feel. Judging that combination has taken a lot of thought and time."

And Cross has got it just right, for after claiming the record at Vizola, he threw me the keys to a

convertible and we drove in convoy from Northern Italy, across Switzerland and Germany. The contrast between being thrown by G-forces across the car at Vizola and the seven-hour cruise was stark: on the circuit, the car roared and twisted; on the road, it was quiet, placid, almost soothing, eating mile after high-speed mile. As we hit the Autobahn, Cross's coupé suddenly surged away and I followed, the speedo needle winding round past 100mph, then 120mph. The car never wavered, the only intrusion the roar of the big Pirellis on the tarmac.

But the best was yet to come: our destination was the Nurburgring, the legendary 14-mile grand circuit, pensioned off because of the terrible attrition rate among drivers. Peter Collins died there, and Niki Lauda was horrifically burned when he crashed on one of the dozens of corners that seem to leap at unwary drivers.

Bizarrely, the track is open to the public who, for a fiver, can whizz around it in the family hatchback. But they have to be careful to dodge test teams from carmakers who regularly use the circuit to press cars to the limit on a variety of bends and surfaces difficult to find elsewhere. And Cross was going to let me drive 14 miles, flat out on a strange circuit famous for crashes in a pre-production version of a £50,000 car.

First time around though, the Jag felt perfectly comfortable. The engine pulled so hard that I could shift through second and third gears manually to power ferociously through bends. With traction control on, the car could not be wrong-footed and even with it switched off, handling was completely predictable so that even I felt brave enough to drive full-pelt without fear of adding myself to the Nurburgring casualty list.

Flick the wheel and a nick on the gearshift and the XK8 was flying, until round the final, long bend flat-out shifting through fourth up and over the crest of the high hill onto the final long, long straight. Into fifth and the speedo was passing 130mph as the Jag straightened up. In the distance, there was a dot, a slow-moving dot which rapidly grew into a battered Fiat Uno on my inside, which, compared with the Jag, looked as though it was standing still. As the XK8 whooshed level, beaming faces of a man and wife appeared at the window waving furiously as though Michael Schumacher had swept past.

If they were disappointed the driver was only me, they didn't show it. They must have been delighted enough to catch a glimpse of a car which is about to add to the legend of Jaguar.



Cruiser that is at home on the racetrack

HOW THE CAT REJOINED THE CREAM

Jaguar is the most efficient car company in Ford's worldwide empire, according to executives who have turned the business around within seven years.

The accolade was hard won, with the workforce halved and

wholesale changes to assembly lines as Ford executives battled to reduce costs, improve efficiency and eradicate the faults that had dented Jaguar's reputation with buyers.

Nick Scheele, Jaguar's chairman, says: "We are now producing quality better than almost anybody else in the world and the customers are noticing that more and more."

Ford bought Jaguar in 1989 for £1.6 billion, when the company seemed to be brimming with confidence. However, the success hid problems of overstaffing and inefficiency at its factories in Birmingham and Coventry where working practices were years out of date. When Ford appointed manufacturing expert Bill

Hayden to run Jaguar, he could barely believe what he saw: Jaguar was the worst car factory he had seen outside of Russia, he said.

There have been leaps and bounds since, making the XK8 the best-built car ever to come

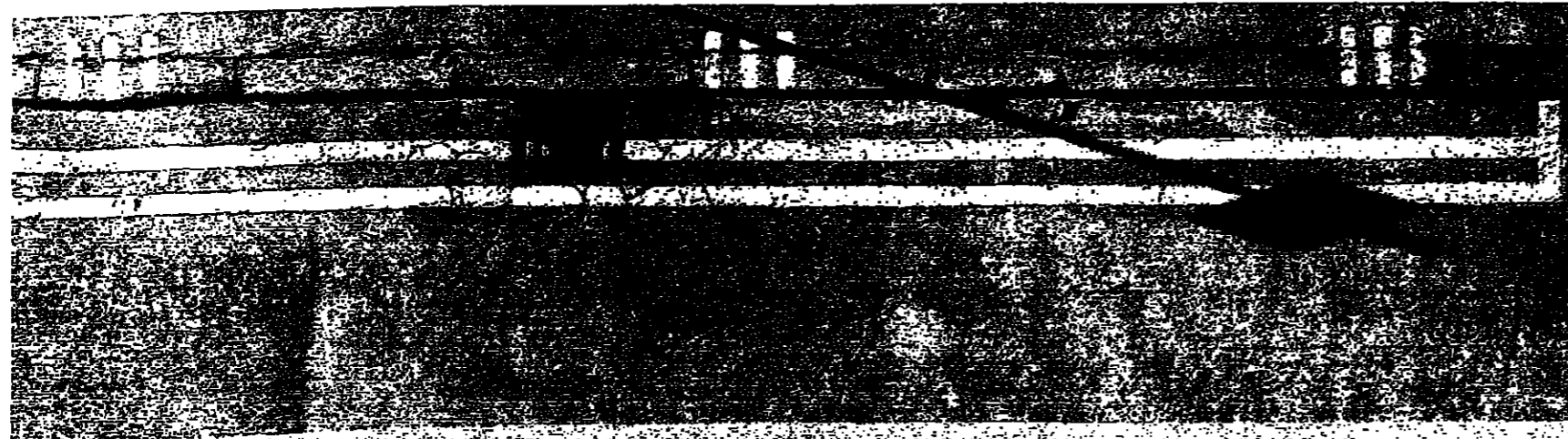
from Jaguar. Evidence comes from Jaguar's main market, America, where the regular surveys from J. D. Power and Associates are regarded as the ultimate guide to the best cars on the market. Jaguar is outstripping Mercedes and BMW; now its target is the leader, the Toyota Lexus.

"We are not far behind," says Scheele. "Jaguar has had the will to transform the business and the rewards are following."

The rewards include Ford's decision to let Jaguar build a new smaller car — a reincarnation of the old, much-loved Mark II models. It will be launched in three years, built in Birmingham.



Nick Scheele: better quality



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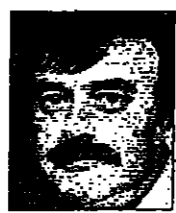
Another Tony swerves right

The party conference season and the likes of Mr Neil Hamilton have conspired to take up altogether too much space in the media, blocking out reports of party conferences that really matter. So *Driven to Distraction* sent its own reporters to the annual conference of the Democratic Auto Users Party (Daup), which was held this year in the glittering surroundings of the Chicane Winter Gardens, Silverstone.

Huge change has come about in Daup since the election of a dynamic new leader, Tony Walnut-Dash, two years ago. Walnut-Dash and his lovely wife, Cherry Upholstery, have dragged Daup into the late 20th century. Gone are the old, damaging commitments, such as the promotion of car coats and subsidies for the starting-handle industry. Protectionist jingoism has been routed, to the point where any member driving a British-made car can expect automatic expulsion.

Tony and Cherry (as we have learned to call them) arrived at Silverstone in a BMW convertible, to

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



Peter Barnard

be greeted by Daup's life president, Mr Murray Walker, who led the adoring throng in a chorus of *We'll keep the chequered flag flying here* as he escorted Tony to the podium.

"Fellow motorists" Tony began. "Let me not pretend for a moment that I am from Old Daup. My background, nay, my whole instinct, is New Daup. I know that many of you here today were educated in the public sector, you were taught to drive by former bus drivers and ex-



sergeants in the transport corps, whereas I went to a private school.

"And what did I learn at BSM? I learned to steer a straight course. I learned to indicate before turning. I learned to consider other road users. In short, I learned what you learned, albeit without having to practise on a disused airfield. We are, you and me, as one in that we have arrived at the same destination by different routes. And now that we are here, you have asked me: where are we going?"

Walnut-Dash went on to thrill his audience with an eloquent exposition of his commitment to European Motoring Union (Emu). The Single European Car will be the core project at the heart of his administration," he said. "The Sec means egalitarianism. It will be the manifestation of an integrated Europe. "It will be the stakeholder's car. Every individual working on it, every individual driving it, will be able to feel part of a single move-

ment, to have a shared destiny. A car with French bodywork, German engines, Italian interior design, Spanish bumpers, Czech hubcaps and, yes, a logo created in Soho.

Walnut-Dash had earlier won ringing endorsement for his policy when National Steering Committee elections routed the left and returned candidates who favour driving on the right, although sceptics doubt whether such a switch can be "phased in" as Daup is promising.

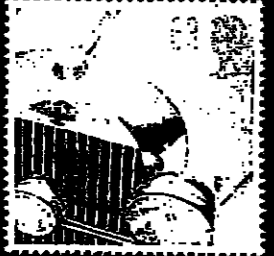
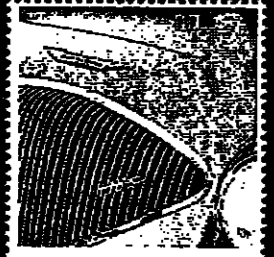
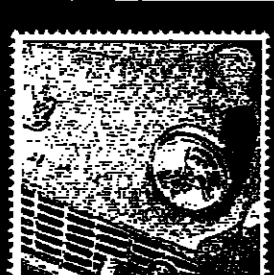
Opponents claim the switch will lead to chaos and say that Daup is vague about how much the change will cost. Walnut-Dash's avuncular deputy, John Tractor, is said to have opposed the scheme, but came on board in exchange for a promise that Soho logo designers would be allowed to join a trade union.

Walnut-Dash, speaking from beneath a video wall showing the M1 with no lanes coned off (opponents claim the film is a fake) ended his speech with a denunciation of the present government: "Seventeen years of jams! Seventeen years in which the Association of Traffic Cone Manufacturers got rich and the rest of us got late. Railways sold to millionaires! Hard shoulders packed with sobbing women!"

"I say to you today: only Daup can release the British driver from this corrupt and shaming madness. Drive back to your constituencies and prepare for government."

CAR PRIZES

Stamp of true classics



MORE THAN 50,000 readers have so far entered the competition to win one of five classic cars which was launched in *Car 96* last month. The prizes in our contest, a Triumph TR3A, MG TC, Morgan Plus Four, Austin Healey 100/4 and Jaguar XK 120, were inspired by this set of five stamps ranging from 20p to 63p. Issued to commemorate the centenary of the British motor industry they went on sale last Tuesday. They feature pictures taken by Simon Clay, photographer for the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu, of examples of each of the marques.

Grr, it's the Mini Mouth

It comes in any racy colour you like — so long, says Vaughan Freeman — as it's slower

Only the quirky "all-new" Mini could come up with a Sports Pack that actually makes the car go slower, and offer a Mini Cooper version that is more of a dawdler than its predecessor.

Rover, giving the 1997 Mini its most radical redesign in 37 years, has decided that new Minis will sell on image alone, jettisoning any pretensions to greater performance.

Instead, major advances for the range include putting foam in the car's roof-lining, moving the radiator from the side to the front of the engine bay, and introducing "up to the moment" control stalks that allow the driver to reach the lighting controls without lunging across the cabin.

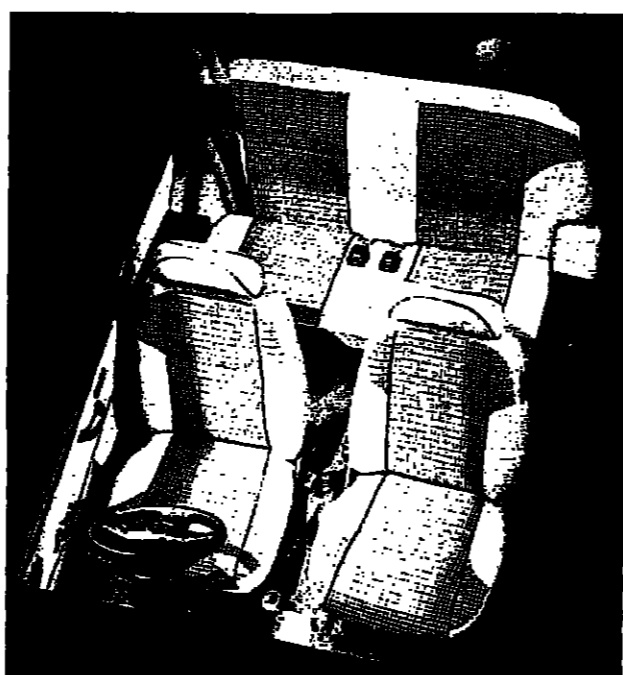
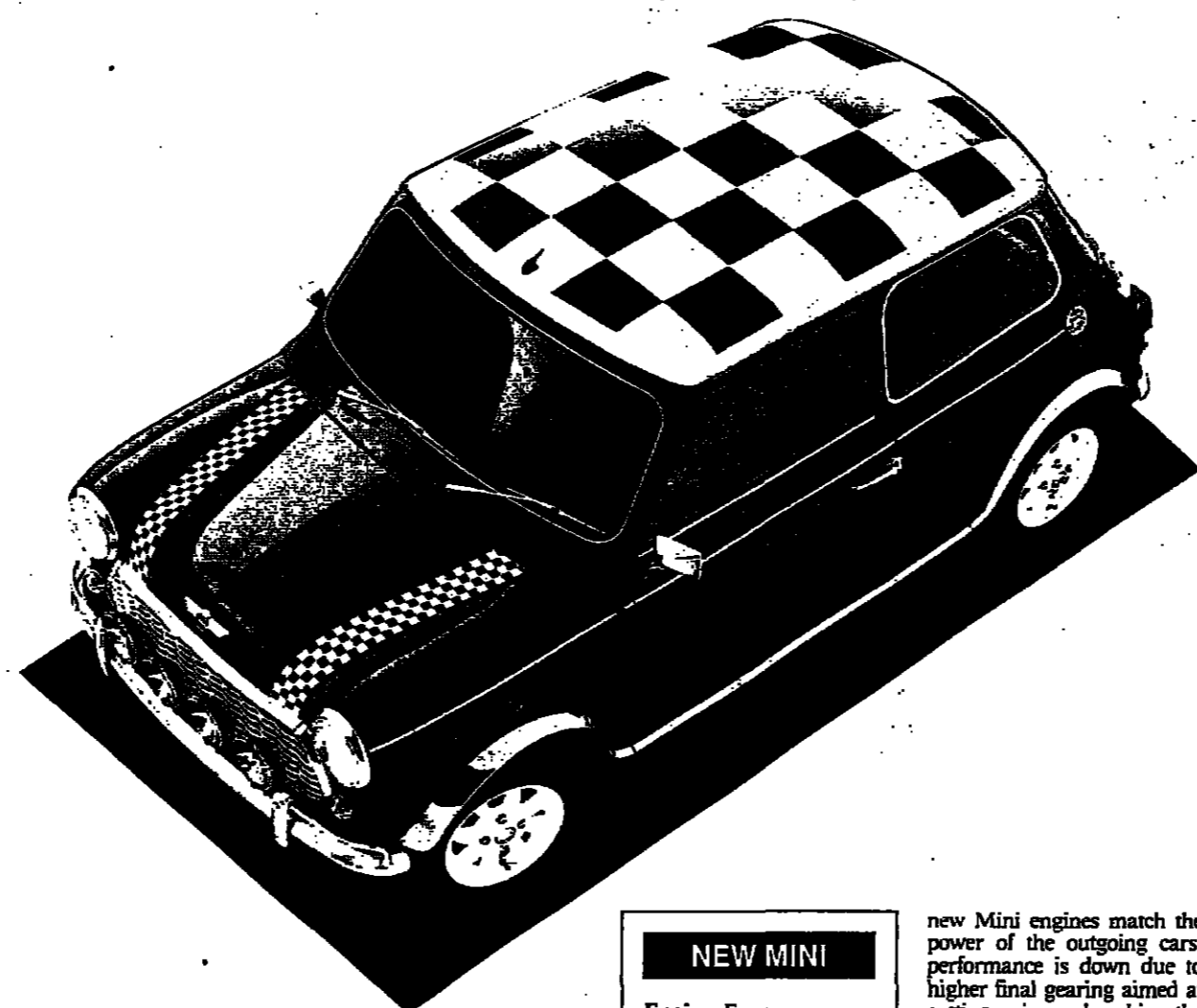
The changes will be enough to keep the Mini rolling up to the year 2003 when tougher emission and crash regulations spell the end of Britain's most successful car. By then, Rover will have a new Mini powered by engines made by Chrysler in Latin America.

For now, Rover will sell just the Mini and Mini Cooper versions, identical apart from the Cooper's distinguishing white roof, bonnet stripes, spot-lamps and sports alloy wheels. The model to have suffered most from this is the Cooper, the mean machine that endowed both Michael Caine and the Mini with genuine film-star status in *The Italian Job*, that slayed its rallying competitors in the 1960s and was once the epitome of fast motoring. For it is slower than the car it replaces.

Whereas the 1995 Mini Cooper has a top speed of 92mph, the new model can only reach 90mph, and while this year's car will go from a standing start to 60mph in 11.5 seconds, the new, improved version will take 12.2 seconds.

The Sports Pack is at best a misnomer, at worst a somewhat cynical way of relieving Mini owners of a further £795. Adding the Sports Pack's MiniStyle alloy wheels, four front-mounted rally-style fog lamps, chrome tailpipe and extra instrument gauges, reduces the top speed still further to 84mph because of the extra aerodynamic drag of the wider 13in tyres.

What might seem to appear to be a triumph of packaging over content in fact, says Rover, reflects the desires of today's Mini customers:



The Italian job: racing style is more talk than torque

"Typical Mini buyers are now less likely to be families seeking a second or third car, but increasingly to be single, well-educated professional and managerial people desiring a fashion statement. The Mini and the Mini Cooper have identical 63bhp engines, identical performance figures, and both can be fitted with the sluggish Sports Pack, for the ultimate in street style."

So how do they differ? Rover says: "Both cars are priced identically in standard form — customers simply choose the imagery that they prefer. The 1997 Mini allows the customer to choose a wide range of unique colours, trims, options and accessories enabling the car truly to reflect the owner's personality."

Behind the imagery are real changes however. The Mini

NEW MINI

Engine: Four-cylinder, 63bhp, 1.275cc petrol, driving four-speed manual gearbox. 0-60mph: 12.2 seconds (12.8 with Sports Pack). Top speed: 90mph (84mph with Sports Pack). Economy: 33.4mpg urban (including cold start), 51.8mpg out of town, 43mpg combined. Equipment: Driver airbag, seat-belt pretensioners, side door anti-intrusion beams, wood fascia, immobiliser, alarm. Price: £8,995.

was first launched 37 years ago, and in shape and size is virtually unchanged. Developing the car to meet ever more stringent emissions and safety regulations has presented Mini and Rover designers with a major challenge.

For the first time, the Mini gets a driver's-side airbag. New engine design, including multi-point fuel injection, means the Mini can meet all air pollution laws by borrowing on engine management technology from the Rover 800 and MGF sportster, while noise from the car has been halved at motorway speeds.

The new Minis also get the MGF steering wheel, and seats based on the design of the new Rover 200. While the

new Mini engines match the power of the outgoing cars, performance is down due to higher final gearing aimed at cutting noise and making the ride more civilised.

Rover says: "This, coupled with an inevitable weight increase of around 3.5 per cent, means a slight reduction in 'on paper' performance. The performance figures however remain very competitive."

The new Mini and Mini Cooper, unveiled in the week that Rover chief executive Walter Hasselkus said Rover would be building a totally new design Mini from the year 2000, is likely to be the last version based on the mould-breaking Sir Alec Issigonis design.

Hasselkus said: "The Mini was launched in 1959, and has been an incredible success story in itself, and while I am saying that it will be replaced, it will also be a continuation. There will be a new Mini but with the same emotions of the old one."

Until the new car arrives, Rover is hoping that this interim model will fill the gap and give Mini lovers enough to be going on with. Rover says the new car has benefited from "tens of millions of pounds worth" of new investment.

Rover spokesman Denis Chick said: "People have asked us why we have spent so much money redesigning the 1997 Mini when there is a new car coming, and the answer is that the Mini is very popular still, and the name is very, very important to us, and we want to keep it strong."

AA GRIDLOCK GUIDE

● LONDON
A21 Orpington; roadworks on Sevenoaks Road between Green Street Lane. Delays.
A217 Wandsworth; roadworks on the south side of Wandsworth Bridge will cause delays on the approaches.
A400 Kentish Town; resurfacing on Fortress Road. Southbound traffic diverted from the Archway roundabout and northbound from Camden Road.
A406 East Finchley; traffic down to a single lane on the North Circular Road at various locations between the A1 and Colney Hatch Lane.
A501 Islington; restrictions between High Street and Wakeley Street for pavement resurfacing work. Expect delays as a result.

● SOUTH EAST
M4 Junction 10; entry and exit slip roads at the Reading East (A329M) junction closed overnight between in both directions. Diversions.
A404 High Wycombe; temporary lights controlling traffic on Amersham Road for cable laying work will cause delays at peak periods.
M25 Junctions 2-3; contraflow between the Dartford and M20 junctions for major roadworks in both directions, with occasional slip road closures as well. Expect regular delays.
M25 Junctions 6-10; restrictions and lane closures both ways between Godstone and the A3. A320 Guildford; Stoke Road closed outbound. Diversions.

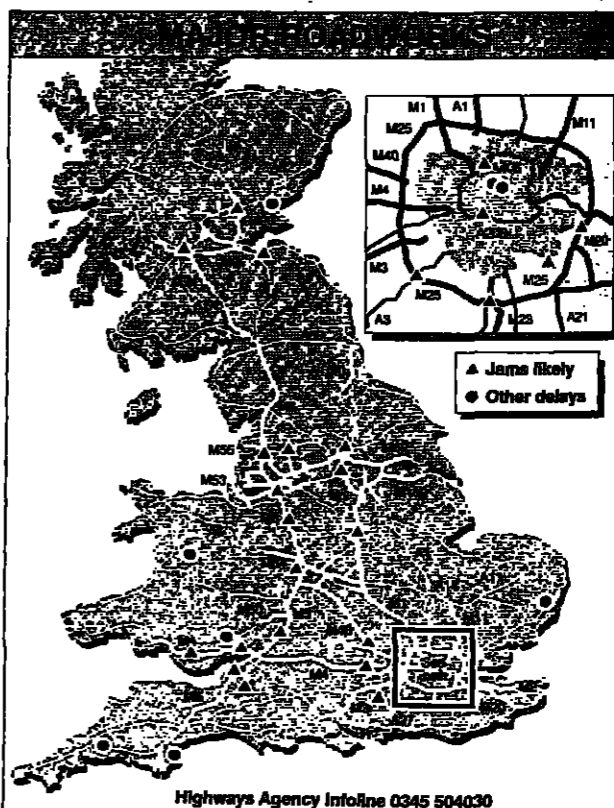
● SOUTH WEST
A388 Dorchester; temporary lights.
A381 Teignmouth; roadworks between Salcombe Dip and Inverleigh Drive.
M5 Junctions 17-20; contraflow and 50mph speed limit across the Avonmouth Bridge.
A38 Gloucester; roadworks at the Cole Avenue roundabout. Long delays.
A39 Wells; work on Glastonbury Road at the junction with the Relief Road. Delays.
(until 8th October)
● MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA
A500 Stoke on Trent; contraflow on the D-Road between Talke and Stoke on Trent as roadworks continue. Expect regular delays.
M6 Junctions 20-21; carriageway reduced to three lanes in each direction with no right turn lanes.
A6144 Halesworth; temporary lights on London Road.
A41 Wolverhampton; temporary lights on Bilston Road between Eagle Street and Chillingworth Street. Peak-time delays.
● NORTH
M6 Junctions 30-32; lane

closures both ways for repair work between the M61 and M55 junctions will cause delays as traffic builds at peak periods.
A679 Burnley; lane closures for water main work on Accrington Road at the Liverpool Road junction. Delays at peak periods, especially from the M65 at junction 9.
A635 Barnsley; Doncaster Road closed outbound for resurfacing work, with diversions operating via the A61 Sheffield Road. Expect peak-time delays.
M1 Junction 47; major long-term roadworks continue around the Leeds junction with lane and speed restrictions as a result. Expect delays on the M1, M621 and Dewsbury Road.

● WALES
A470 Powys; temporary lights controlling traffic at Ffridd Fawr near Llanfrynneir as roadworks continue.
M4 Junctions 35-34; contraflow with traffic down to two lanes in both directions as major roadworks continue between the Bridgend and Llanfair Junctions.
A472 Pontypool; contraflow between Pontemollie and the Heron roundabout. Expect lengthy delays, especially from the A4042.
M4 Junctions 23a-24; lane closures between the Magor and Newport junctions as major widening work continues. Expect regular rush-hour delays.

● Scotland
A92 Tay Road Bridge; lane closure southbound on Tay Road Bridge for maintenance work. Expect delays at peak periods.
A8 Edinburgh; Princes Street closed eastbound to motor vehicles, with a diversion operating via South Charlotte Street, Queen Street and York Place.
M8 Junction 15; Stirling Road westbound on-ramp and Castle Street Eastbound off-ramp are closed for roadworks.
A9 Perth; restrictions in both directions between Perth and the Highland boundary at various locations for roadworks.

Northern Ireland
M22; contraflow between Ballygrobby and Dunsilly for bridge maintenance work.
M1; down to two lanes both ways between the Saintfield Road and Ballynahinch Road bridges for maintenance work.
A2 Larne Road; temporary lights on Larne Road for bridge maintenance work.
A28 Markethill; resurfacing on Armagh Road with temporary lights controlling traffic will cause delays at peak periods.
A27 Craigavon; roadworks at the Shorts crossroads with temporary lights controlling traffic will cause delays.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Not the people's Ka

ANXIOUS to introduce opinion-formers from China, the world's biggest marketplace, to its new Ka model, Ford invited seven top Chinese journalists — including the 80-year-old editor of the *People's Daily* — to the Paris Motor Show. Six Ka were lined up ready for a tour of France's best rural roads... except for one slight hitch. Only one of the Chinese delegation could drive. A weary Ford PR man says: "Well, they can sit in it anyway."

Why aye, Nissan

NISSAN is to build a new estate car at Washington, Tyne and Wear. The £70 million investment means the plant can build about 20,000 of the Primera-based estates. Styled by Nissan in Munich, the five-seater will be for worldwide distribution. Washington is also to start making Primera diesel engines, replacing equipment previously imported from Japan.

Catholic tastes

WHEN Pope John Paul II came to Britain, he travelled around in a converted Range Rover. But his new car will be a little swankier, for the Vatican has ordered a five-litre V8 Mercedes S500, which is being tailored for Papal needs by a company called Stola in Turin.

Fiat hike

FIAT has raised prices by an average 1.6 per cent. The range now starts with the Cinquecento S at £5,682 up to the range-topping Ulysses 1.9TD EL people-carrier which will get a new sticker price of £20,131.

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THE 1905 ROLLS-ROYCE
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THE CAR WHICH INSPIRED BILLIE HOLIDAY'S "SOLID GOLD CADILLAC"
REAL LEOPOLDORENI UNPOLOISHED BUT WAS ACTUALLY ONLY GOLD-PLATED...

WHEN TONY BRIDGES' CONNAUGHT WON AT SYDNEY IN 1955, HIS WAS THE FIRST ALL-BRITISH G.P. VICTORY SINCE SIR HENRY SUGGINS' 1923 SUNBEAM.

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Preview: inside information on the newest concept cars being shown in Europe, but not in Britain

The future: you saw it here first

They are the most desirable cars in the world, dream models of the future which will be drooled over by thousands of motorists — but not in Britain, *Kevin Eason writes*. For while visitors to the Paris Motor Show this week were shown a series of delectable concept cars, none of them will be coming to the British International Motor Show which opens later this month at the NEC in Birmingham.

Carmakers say the two shows come too close together to allow them enough time to transfer cars from Paris to Birmingham — which is a pity for visitors to the Birmingham show, which will celebrate 100 years of British carmaking this year. Even though Britain is one of the birthplaces of the motor industry, with more than its share of famous names, and remains an important centre for design, engineering and motor

racing, the rest of Europe does not regard the British show as having the same status as exhibitions in Paris, Frankfurt and Geneva. The good news, though, is that Car 96 was in Paris to bring you details of the cars you cannot see (unless you are willing to book a day out on a Eurostar ticket to the French capital). Cars like the F200, which was rolled out by Mercedes. Not only does it look stunning, Mercedes

MERCEDES-BENZ

has also loaded the F200 with the gadgets the company's engineers believe we will all have on our cars in the next century.

The most astonishing innovation is in the cabin, which has none of the familiar cues of the modern motor car. Steering wheel and pedals are abolished to be replaced by a fighter pilot-style set of

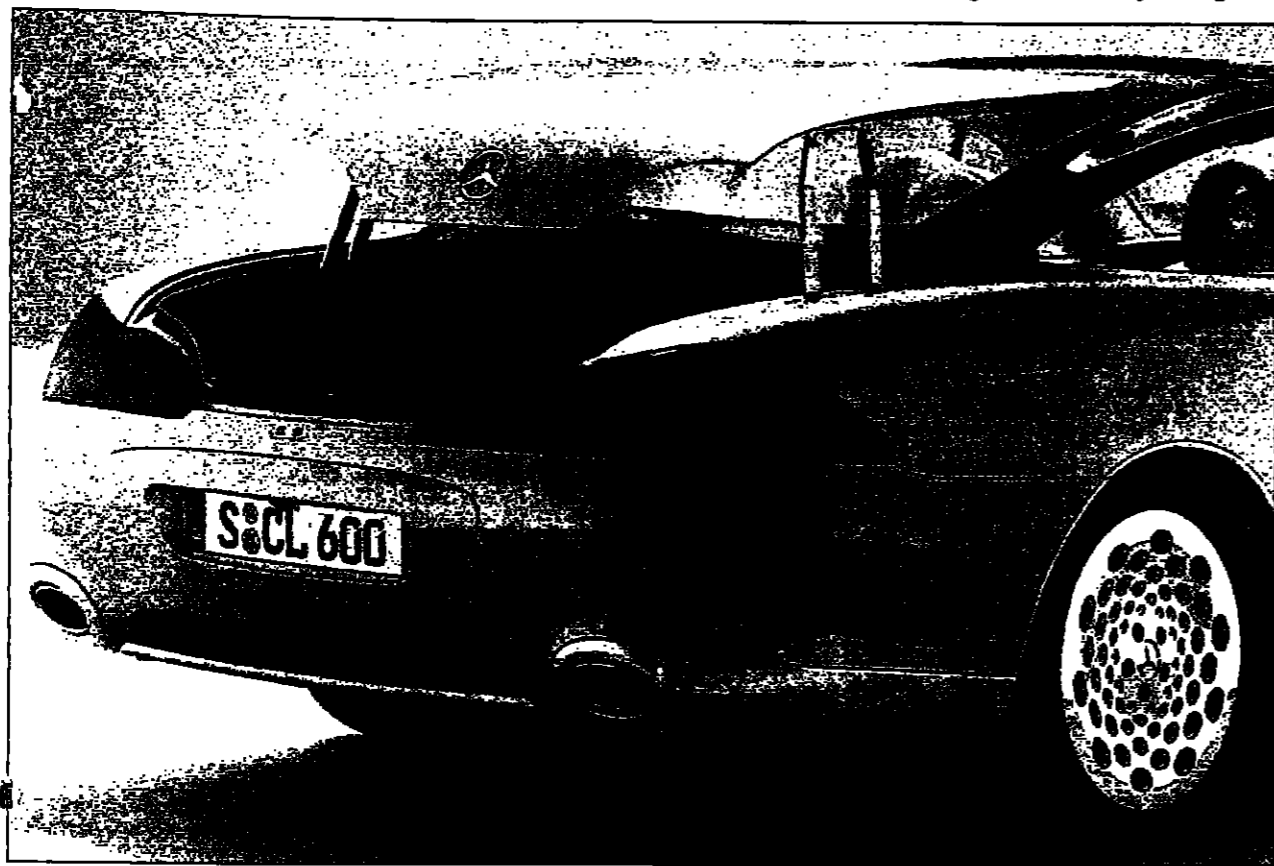
controls. To steer, the driver moves the central joystick to the left or right, accelerating by pushing the stick forward and braking by pulling it back. There are no conventional systems under the bonnet either, with the messages from the joystick sent electronically instead of mechanically.

Rear-view mirrors have been abolished, replaced by video cameras which transfer images to a dashboard video screen.

There is no key to enter, not even a remote "blipper", just a magnetic card which unlocks doors which then sweep out and over to allow a more generous entry gap. Once under way, information is relayed to the driver digitally on electronic screens while the car senses every movement, ironing out bends and bumps, the suspension adjusting to prevent the bodywork from pitching and rolling.

Even the headlamps are "intelligent", providing extra light as the speed of the car increases, while the boot lid is a clever four-joint system which levers upwards to provide the maximum loading space.

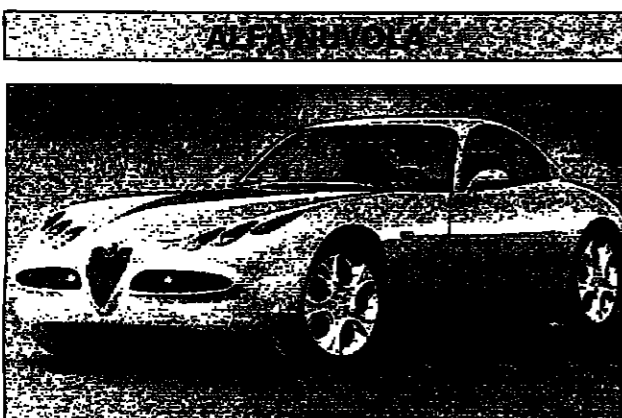
They are all features Jurgen Hubbert, head of Mercedes' car business, told visitors to the Paris show will be with us in the next century, the technical experimentation of today becoming the standard engineering of tomorrow. Pity you will have to wait to see it.



All the German engineering money can buy: the boot lid levers upwards to provide the maximum loading space



Inside the F200, the instruments look and function more like the controls of a fighter jet than a car dashboard



One vision of the future unveiled in Paris created such interest that although it was not originally destined for Birmingham, desperate efforts to get it to the NEC were under way this week, writes Alan Copps.

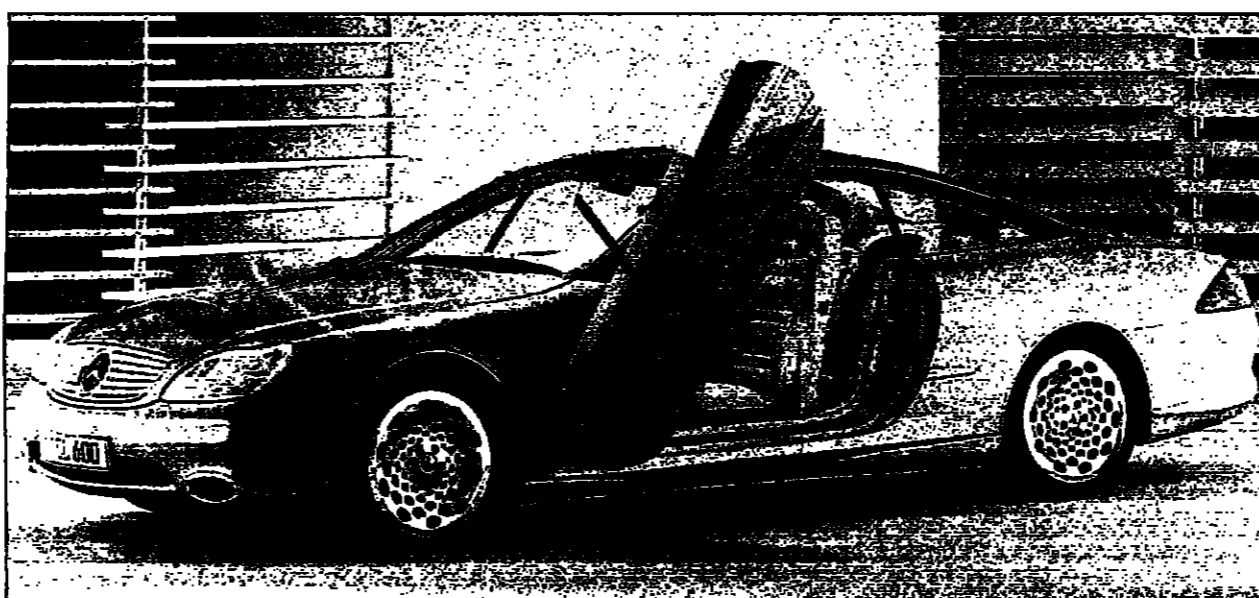
The Alfa Romeo Nuvoletta is a striking-looking concept which has some resemblance to the company's highly successful GTV coupé, although it is larger and its low rear end goes very much against the current trend for coupés. But under the skin Alfa has turned the clock back to the days when sports car bodies were built individually on a separate chassis.

The two-seater shown at Paris was a bold, aggressive design drawn up by Alfa's own styling centre on the

space-frame chassis. The striking rear end has more than a hint of 1930s sports cars about it but features high-tech lights that give adequate illumination even though they lie almost flat.

There are no plans to put it into production, but it was built using techniques applicable to production rather than prototype models. Alfa says the idea was to produce a chassis which it could offer to various bespoke coach-builders to experiment with different body styles. It's an old-fashioned way to answer the current demand for more and more "niche" models.

The engine, however, is more than a concept. The 24-valve, twin turbo, 2.5-litre V6 is due to appear in a new version of the Alfa 166.



All the gadgets to take driving into the 21st century: magnetic cards unlock doors which then sweep out and over

FIAT MULTIPLA

The race to produce a smaller version of the people carrier has started with a vengeance. Although Renault would seem to be in pole position with its Megane Scénic (see page 12), Fiat is hard on its heels, writes Alan Copps. The Italian company's latest proposal for carrying six people around in a small car is the Multipla, which has two rows of seats three abreast. Sounds like the perfect solution for talkative families.

Unveiled at the Paris show, the car is destined for production within two years. It is the result of a strict challenge to the company's style department: to create a car no longer than the Tipo or Brava but able to carry six people and their luggage at a cost significantly lower than an MPV.

The Multipla bears the name of the 1960 version of the Fiat 600, one of several vehicles that might claim to be the first people carrier. However, as the designers set to work it looked less and less like any existing MPV.

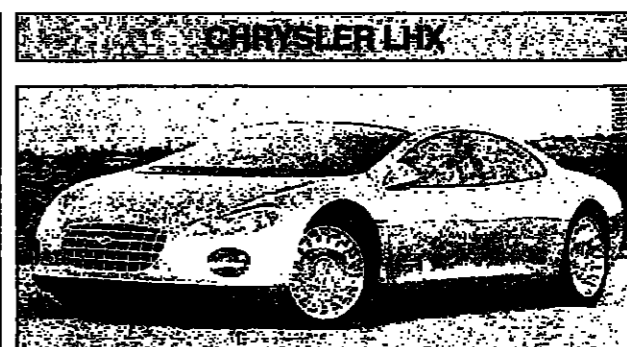
It is wider than most cars of



its class but still within normal limits. To accommodate the seats three abreast, door handles and armrests are set flush with the window sills. The middle front seat is positioned slightly further back to allow driver comfort and can be replaced by a table or a refrigerator, according to need.

The seats at the back can be swivelled through 180 degrees to increase load-carrying capacity or be easily removed to accommodate extra luggage or sports equipment like skis and bicycles. Fiat claims that it will have twice as much space for luggage as a conventional car.

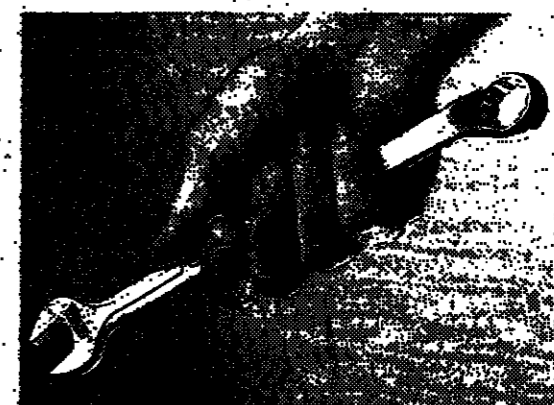
One of the most innovative items is the fascia where the gear lever is sited along with other controls individually shaped to aid recognition and use. The central instrument panel is shaped and raised so that the driver can consult it without taking eyes off the road, while the heating and ventilation controls seem to sprout from the centre of the dashboard.



It is the car to die for, if ever it hits British shores, *Kevin Eason writes*. Chrysler showed its LHX concept limousine but executives are hinting that the next generation of the company's biggest models will look like this. Under the bonnet is a 250 brake-horse power 3.5-litre mated to a four-speed automatic but it is the dramatic sweep of the car's lines which make it so beautiful. The sculptured nose and raked windscreen lead to a long, flat rear, held up by the latest 20-inch

wheels. In its ultimate form there is an entertainment centre for rear-seat passengers, while all the dashboard data for the driver is housed in a central pod at eyeline level.

Chrysler has become darned good at design and experts reckon the company will chop off the rear overhang of the concept model to put a slightly more compact design into production for the US within three years. But still no sign of it coming to Britain in right-hand-drive form, unfortunately.



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PEUGEOT ASPHALTE

Fans of arcade games will know how to start up Peugeot's Asphalté. Instead of a conventional ignition key, drivers just slip a token into the dashboard and push the start button — a bit like a Sega computer challenge. *Kevin Eason writes*.

The idea is among a torrent to come from Peugeot's design studios as the company explores the future. The question now is whether Peugeot is willing to allow those ideas to run riot through its conventional car range, for there are no plans as yet to build anything as radical as the Asphalté or its concept sister car, the Touareg.

Pity, because the Asphalté is a pretty car following in the wheeltracks of Renault's fabulous little two-seater Spider, which has gone into production. The Asphalté is similarly spartan, with no doors so the driver and passenger have to

hop into seats which have been moulded into the bodywork. The steering wheel comes off to allow the driver entry and then there are no seat adjustments: you instead adjust the pedals electronically.

The bodysell is a tough carbon composite for strength and, if the driver is alone, a shield can be fitted over the passenger compartment for extra rigidity and protection from the elements. There is no windscreen, just wind defectors designed to push the airflow over the heads of the two-seater's occupants.

The bonnet lies almost flat, which gave Peugeot's engineers an intriguing and important problem to solve: how to get the engine in. Their answer was to "flatten" a conventional 90 brake-horse power 1.6-litre, taken from the Peugeot 106, and rake it at a steep angle of 71 degrees,

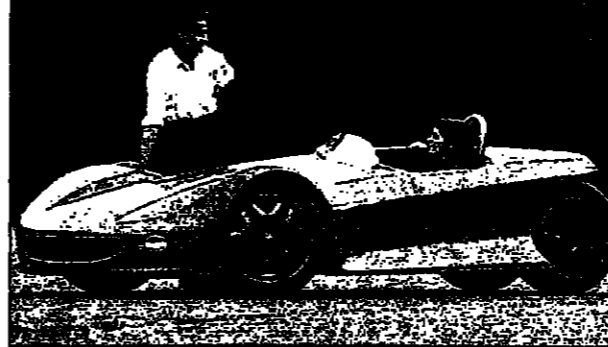


The Touareg: off-road and hose-down technology

transversely in front of the cabin. It is coupled to an automatic gearbox controlled from a stalk at the side of the steering wheel. Although the engine is not that powerful, Peugeot reckons that the smooth aerodynamics and light weight — only 580kg — will allow the Asphalté to surge to 62mph in 9.5 seconds and on to a top speed of 120mph. How it handles will be open to debate, though, for

the rear wheels are set substantially closer together than the front, allowing the rear to narrow to a teardrop-style shape. If it doesn't turn too well, at least the safety package is good: as soon as the driver clicks the seatbelt, two roll bars pop up while the cockpit has high sides.

Peugeot turned to more unconventional power for its four-wheel-drive Touareg. It has a centrally mounted 35-



The Asphalté: like driving an arcade-game car

kilowatt electric motor, backed up by a small four-cylinder petrol engine which can either boost power or act as a generator to restore electric power. That gives the car a range of about 190 miles and a top speed of about 70mph. The pattern of simplicity set by the Asphalté is continued in the Touareg, with designers wanting to hop into a vehicle which has no doors but which stands comparatively tall. At least

you do not have to remove the steering wheel and, once in, you can adjust the wheel and pedals for the best driving position.

Better still for the off-road enthusiast, there is nothing you can get dirty. Peugeot's young design team believes that once you get home from pounding the field with your muddy wellies, you just take a hose to the inside and give the Touareg a good soaking.

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5

The competition-beating XK8 is pure Jaguar, says Kevin Eason

So cool, it could have been Lyons-made

Right price, right pace, right time: a drive in the big cat's new sports car can only silence the critics

The scope for error was vast. Bob Dover knows that living with a legend is all very well, but the expectations are high when the wraps come off every new Jaguar.

Sir William Lyons built one of the most famous names in the motoring world with a succession of ground-breaking designs to create some of the most desirable cars of all time. Trouble is that the legacy of legend can be hard to bear in a tougher world when the gap between the competition is razor thin.

But Mr Dover can sleep easily in his bed tonight, for the XK8 is a car that Sir William would have approved of. Jaguar has found the perfect balance between the grand tourer and nimble sports car... and at a bargain-basement price that will set the competition on its ear. All Sir William's cars were value-for-money, and XK8 is no different: £47,950 for the coupe — between £32,000 and £35,000 cheaper than BMW, Mercedes or Aston Martin rivals offering equivalent performance and equipment.

The XK8 was the most demanding programme yet set for Jaguar by its Ford owner because it had to be delivered from concept to finished car in 30 months. In fact, the engineering team came in three months ahead of schedule — a cost saving of about £30 million — and they surpassed every tough target set on quality to make this the best-built Jaguar ever, according to Nick Scheele, Jaguar's chairman. This is a British car that could set Japanese standards for reliability and quality, he says, levels which could never be achieved on the outgoing XJS.

Because XK8 is based on the old XJS platform, worries ran high that the car would be little more than a revamp of the old barge. The XJS has been Jaguar's best-selling sports car, but it had 20 years of production and, in truth, was as unlovely as a car can get, with more flying buttresses than the average cathedral. Any carry-over would have destroyed the XK8's chances. In fact, Dover, XK8's chief engineer, says that the car is 80 per cent new, 10 per cent from the XJ saloons and only about 10 per cent — essentially the platform — from the XJS.

At the heart of the changes is a new power-train which is as much a step forward as anything to have come from Jaguar in its history. Jaguar has had only three generations of engine since 1948, all six and 12-cylinder power-packs. The fourth generation departs radically from history in that it is built outside the company — by Ford in Bridgford though designed entirely in-house — and that it is a V8, which is refined, effortless and

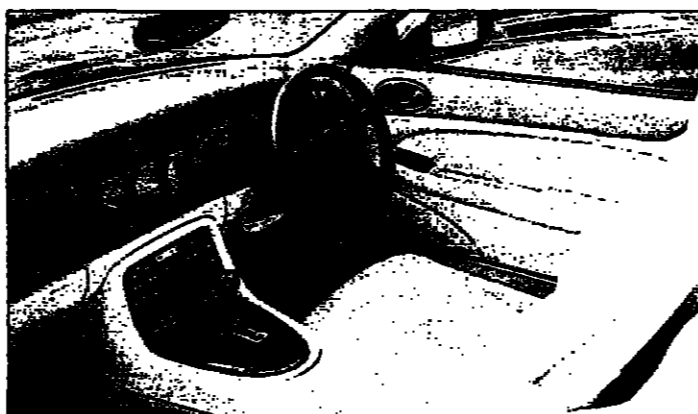


The bonnet diving down to the E-Type style grille is as distinctive a piece of imagery as anything currently on the road. Beneath lies an all-new V8 which proves refined, effortless and powerful

powerful with astonishing acceleration in the mid-range — the place you need it when you want to overtake or pull through tricky uphill bends. Dover reckons the torque, or pulling power, to feed in as soon as the throttle is pushed and there is no doubt that they got it right.

There is no manual gearchange, because Jaguar says that there is no demand. No wonder, because the new five-speed automatic transmission is so smooth and efficient that changes up or down are barely noticed.

While other carmakers have added sequential semi-automatic gearboxes — so the driver pushes forward to change up and back to go down — as the manual alternative in an auto box, Jaguar has stuck resolutely to its J-gate system. It was the right decision because it is so easy to use, the stick simply pushed from second to third and so on. Unlike a sequential change, the driver always knows what gear the car is in because of the location of the gearstick.



Traditional interior comforts feature a magical sound system

Not that even a run of tough and twisting roads needed much gear-changing on first test, such is the flexibility of the new power-train. Second will take the car up to almost 90mph, the V8 growling gently under the long, fluted bonnet. Even when working the car hard, the ride is stable but with enough feedback through the wheel to allow the driver to feel in a Jaguar and the car becomes

one of the most enjoyable to drive in any price bracket, not least because the company has retained the virtues prized most by its traditional buyers.

Forget criticism you might have read that XK8 is too bulky and too like its distant and also Ford-owned cousin, the Aston Martin DB7. I defy anyone to tell me that the XK8 does not look fabulous, particularly as a convertible. The

JAGUAR XK8

Engine: 4-litre AJ-V8 developing 290 brake horse power through five-speed automatic gearbox driving rear wheels. Equipped with traction control.
Performance: 0 to 60mph in 6.4 seconds (6.7 convertible), top speed limited to 156mph (154).
Economy: Fuel consumption, 22.9mpg average (23.3 convertible).
Dimensions: length 4,760mm, width 2,015mm. Weight 2588kg.
Equipment: power steering, anti-lock brakes, airbags, remote locking, alarm immobiliser, tilt steering wheel, air conditioning, steering wheel audio controls, 17in alloy wheels. Convertible has powered foldaway roof.
Price: Coupe £47,950; convertible £54,950.

to the XK8's acoustics by Harmon Kardon, the American specialists. After a window-rattling session with Messrs Elgar, Saint-Saens and Sting, the system catapulted itself from Jaguar option to a "must have" for me.

That touch of extra magic — rarely found among even the most expensive cars — speaks volumes for Jaguar. Other carmakers could produce a valid argument on behalf of the cars competing with the XK8 in an almost overcrowded marketplace. Mercedes could argue for the logic of its engineering, BMW for its reliability, Porsche for its sporting heritage.

But marques rarely appeal to the heart in the way that Jaguar does. The engineering of the XK8 is not just the best to have come out of Coventry in the 60 years since the business was founded, but the car is covered in tiny details, touches which make the driver and passenger feel special as soon as they clutch the keys.

Bob Dover's brief said the XK8 had to be "sensuous, instantly desirable, exhilarating and stimulating". It is and it does.

E-TYPE V XK8

They are soul-sisters, a quarter of a century apart, writes Sue Baker. I drove them minutes apart, and it was a time-war of familiarity. Stepping out of an XK8 and into a newly restored E-Type underlined striking similarities and unexpected differences.

The new Jaguar is the E-Type for the Nineties, evocatively retro-styled, still a sleek and sultry big cat, but fatter and less feral.

The model that is the XK8's historical benchmark has more front and less behind, with a body dominated by its famously phallic bonnet and encasing a narrower, sparser cabin. But it still manages to rival the newcomer for headroom and beats it for visibility.

The E-Type tested is a Series II, 4.2-litre 2+2. When it was new in 1970 it cost £2,708. It was shared by two brothers who drove it hard and with little concern for its future as a covetable classic.

When owner Ray Attewell bought it eight years ago for £4,000, it was a rusty non-runner. It has just emerged from a total restoration, which cost conservatively £25,000, not including hundreds of hours of not including hundreds of hours of preparation work by its owner. It is now effectively a 1970s car built in the 1990s, with body panels rust-protected and fitted to a far higher standard than when new.

Driving both cars back-to-back was as much a reminder of how good a car the E-Type was in its day as an endorsement of the XK8's status as E-Type reinvented.

The height of the two cars is similar, but from the inside the XK8 feels more enclosing. It has a higher waistline and the window area feels smaller, giving the new Jaguar a slightly more claustrophobic feeling. That is despite the XK8 having perceptibly more elbow-room, even though its cabin is conspicuously more sybaritic.



The quarter-century difference belies some striking similarities

Model: Series II fixed-head coupe 2+2.
Engine: 4.2 litre, six-cylinder, 265 bhp.
Dimensions: wheelbase 8ft 9in, length 15ft 4in, width 5ft 6in.
Top speed: 139mph.
0-60: 7.4 secs.
Consumption: avg. 19-20 mpg; touring, 25 mpg.
Insurance: £200-£250 on an agreed-value, limited-mileage (3,000 miles annually) classic car policy.
Original Price: £2,708.71
Value: £25,000.

maple veneers are stained so dark and lacquered so heavily as to be indistinguishable from high-grade plastic, and its leather is perfection.

Where the XK8's ride is a muscular glide, distancing the driver from any physical discomforts from the road surface, the E-Type's is more informative, communicating what is underfoot without relaying much of its harshness. For a sports car built 26 years ago, the ride is remarkably good.

Both cars share a similarly mesmerising presence on the road. Wherever I drove it, the XK8's svelte, sensuous shape swivelled heads in its wake. But they were being turned more by its novelty, days ahead of its official release.

The E-Type commanded just as much attention. But no novelty here — it was simply in warm admiration of an unarguably, dramatically beautiful car.

If an XK8 driving past in the year 2022 still earns as many second looks as a renovated E-Type does today, only then can it truly pass as a worthy successor.

DB7 V XK8



Gorgeous looks, but at a price

Model: Aston Martin DB7 3.2 litre
Engine: supercharged in-line 335bhp six-cylinder.
0-60: 5.7 secs.
Top speed: 165mph.
Dimensions: length 4,646mm, width 1,830mm.
Price: Coupe £82,500, convertible £89,950

The similarity between the Aston Martin DB7 and the XK8 could be too close for comfort — for Aston, anyway. Those curved DB7 haunches and long overhangs tell the story of its heritage, cloned from the Jaguar XJS platform and with a straight-six supercharged 3.2-litre developed from a Jaguar race engine.

Performance figures are roughly similar, and, of course, an Aston is strong on traditional wood and leather like the Jag. But it would be too simple to say the cars are the same. The power characteristics are very different, and the Aston feels tauter and somehow smaller than the XK8, even though the dimensions are similar.

Being part of the same Ford family should not be a problem, although the XK8's value for money could be trying for Aston. Look for some Aston derivatives soon to try to catch the eye.

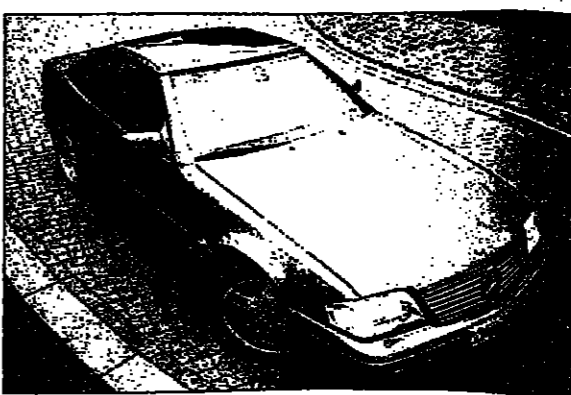
MERCEDES 500SL V XK8

Next to an XK8, Mercedes' SL looks expensive, fat... and damned ugly. The years have not been kind to the SL, and with every passing birthday, it looks more and more like the starlet who piled on the pounds and sprinted past her sell-by date.

The SL looked a stunner at launch — but then there was barely anything else on the road to compare it with apart from the XJS, which was already so old it made the SL look positively anorexic and feel as nimble as George Best in his heyday.

Now Best would be hard-pressed to run a traffic light, never mind a full ninety minutes, while Mercedes answered the competition by loading more into the SL: bigger engines, more gadgets, more everything, except for a stereo fitted as standard.

The result in the SL500, which offers almost similar performance to an XK8, is of a bloated, muscle-bound motor — like being lugged by one of the Gladiators rather than waited and beguiled. Acceleration is bludgeoning, but the sound feedback from the Merc's V8 is industrial rather than seductive. However, the handling is as safe and sound as you would expect from a Mercedes, huge rear tyres spreading themselves all over the road seemingly defying the gods to overcome their sticking power and the traction con-



By comparison, it's both overweight and overpriced

Model: Mercedes SL500.
Engine: 5-litre, 32-valve V8 developing 326bhp through five-speed automatic transmission driving rear wheels.
0-60: 6.5 secs.
Top speed: 155mph (electronically limited).
Consumption: 17.7mpg in town.
Dimensions: length 4,470mm, width 1,812mm.
Price: £80,700 basic

rol system to trick it into a flurry of wheelspin.

The interior of the car is about as welcoming as a prison cell. Mercedes gives you plenty of leather but the instrument dial remains functional to the point of monochrome boredom, the steering wheel apparently comes straight from the deck of a leather-bound yacht and the automatic gearbox is too notchy and twiddly for rapid use for all but the extremely well practised. Of course, there is more equipment than even NASA could use on

a busy day, but that does not make the model more loveable. In fact, the SL — a car born in the 1980s when the Nineties when swooping shapes and curves are in vogue and when its little sister, the SLK, looks cute and cuddly.

There is another thing if you are deciding about buying a new sports car. The SL the 2.8-litre and starts at £37,200 for £97,450 for the SL60 AMG, and you still have to buy your own stereo.

CARMART: YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S NEW, AND WHAT'S USED, ON THE FORECOURTS

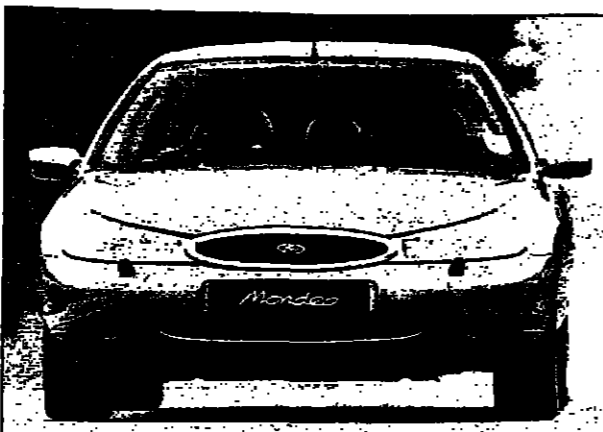
ROADTEST

Ford's subtle rocket

You expect a car like the Mondeo 24-valve to come with at least one set of go-faster stripes and a rear wing about the size of Concorde's, writes Kevin Eason. But there is nothing, just a discreet side-badge which says 24v, and some entertainingly large tyres.

The 2.5-litre V6 engine has torque and rasping power that will leave many a sports car gasping. Power is fed in so low down in the engine revs, the car is wonderfully driveable at all speeds. In fact, the package is so good, I wonder why so many people spend so much on cars which might have more prestigious badges.

The 24v is the top of the Mondeo range, which has now been revamped. We have only been able to test the star



Wide wheels and subtle badging apart, Ford's new Mondeo does little to advertise its status as a sports-car beater

of the line-up, so we will bring news later of the rest.

Fifteen-inch wheels are fitted to most of the 2.5-litre models, with 16-inchers on the sports ST-24. Inside, there is wood and leather if you want it - I prefer to do without both.

Depending where you enter the 24v range, there is air conditioning in a cabin which is both ergonomic and well-coming, and enhanced by one of the new-generation Ford sound systems which has large-format buttons.

Where the 24v becomes a

competitor to BMW or Mercedes is under the bonnet: the 2.5-litre Duratec is a revelation, with a wide power-band making overtaking easy. Just slipping the Mondeo 24v into second or third is enough to get full torque low down, so when you floor the throttle, the car is away immediately.

BMW and Mercedes drivers might think they have more cachet in their cars, but I guarantee that motorists who enjoy driving would not walk away from a Mondeo 24v after a test. It really is that good.



FORD MONDEO 24V

Engine: 2.5-litre, 24-valve six cylinder laid out in V format, producing 169 brake horse power through five-speed manual gearbox driving front wheels.

Performance: 0 to 60mph in eight seconds, top speed 139mph; fuel consumption, 28 miles to the gallon on average, 20.8mpg in town.

Equipment: 16in wheels, rear spoiler, sports seats, rear centre armrest, three-point centre seatbelt, remote steering column control for stereo, powered front windows. Powered tilt-and-slide sunroof, alarm and immobiliser with remote central locking.

Price: To be announced next month.

SPARE PARTS

History sold and shown

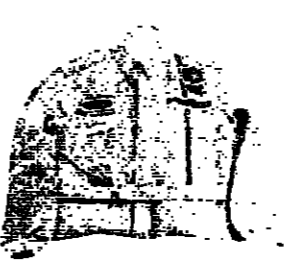
CHRYSLER Jeep is going back to its roots by unveiling an all-new Jeep Wrangler at the Birmingham motor show later this month, writes Alan Capps. The Wrangler, ultimate successor to the Second World War general-purpose vehicle that gave the world the word "jeep", has been completely updated for a new right-hand drive version.

Other new vehicles include, for the first time in Britain, the Chrysler Voyager, claimed to be the world's first people-carrier, which has sold seven million worldwide since its launch in 1984.



New Jeep set for Britain

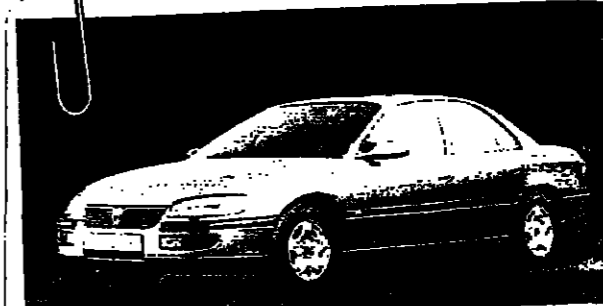
RACE overall worn by three-times world champion Jackie Stewart in the 1971 Monte Grand Prix, sold for £22,425 (against an estimate of £18,000) at Brooks's Formula One sale in London last Monday. Stirling Moss's first white race helmet fetched £20,450.



High price for GP jacket

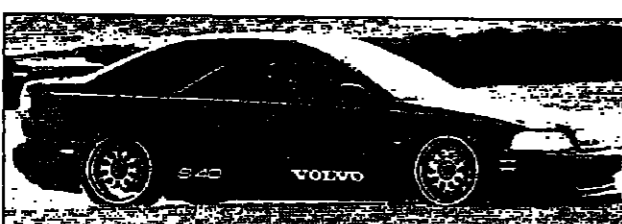
THE TWIN centenaries of the British motor industry and cinema are being celebrated at a specially created venue, the Ultimate Drive-In at Centenary Square, Birmingham. Kevin Costner's golfing movie *The Tin Cup* has its premiere on October 13.

USED CAR BRIEF



Vauxhall Omega Vauxhall's big car, the Omega replaced the Carlton and Senator which had earned their spurs as high-mileage motorway workhorses with police forces nationwide. Launched in 1994, the Omega four-door saloon and five-door estate range has endless engine options, from the 2-litre eight and 16-valve, to 2.5 and 3-litre V6, and the 2.5-litre turbodiesel, sourced from BMW.

- GOOD NEWS** Built to rival the BMWs and Rovers of the world, the Omega features suitably admirable build quality, and almost all will have come off a company car fleet. So check on its pedigree and that it has a full service history.
- LOOK FOR** A driver side airbag is going to be one of the newer used cars around, and almost all will have come off a company car fleet. So check on its pedigree and that it has a full service history.
- SAFETY RATING** A driver side airbag is standard equipment on the Omega range, as is anti-lock braking and three-point seatbelts for all three rear seat passengers, and there are dual airbags on the CD and CDX models. Big cars are generally safer and this is no exception.
- REPLACEMENT PARTS** (Prices include VAT); clutch assembly £150; full exhaust £275; catalytic converter £225; rear brake pads (pair) £110; front brake pads (pair) £80; alternator (exchange) £250; gearbox £1,500; tyre £80-75.
- OVERALL** Even a high mileage two-year-old Omega has a decade at least of honest driving left in it. Big cars always depreciate fastest and there are huge savings to be had buying such cars second-hand rather than new. The Omega is a genuine modern car, safe, sophisticated and economical to run, as well as superbly comfortable on long journeys even in 2-litre 16-valve form.
- BAD NEWS** Inside the car has earned some criticism for over-exuberant use of plastic. Check that trim and upholstery are as healthy looking as the rest of the car should be.
- AVOID** As the emissions element of the MOT gets ever more stringent, check that the car's catalytic converter is in perfect condition. For early cars especially, under-car knock and bumps could have rendered the "cat" useless.
- INSURANCE** A 1994 2-litre Omega costs a 55-year old man in Winchester with full no claims bonus, £244 fully comprehensive. A similar female pays £231. A 22-year old male, with one year no claims living in South London pays £1,892, a similar female £1,794. (AA Insurance 0800 444777)
- PRICES** Expect to pay £11,000 for a 1994 L-reg 2.0i 16-valve Select saloon, £13,750 for a 1995 M-reg 2.0i 16-valve Select, £13,000 for a 1994 L-reg 2.5i V6 five-door estate, £15,750 for a 1995 M-reg 2.5i Turbo diesel GLS saloon, and £20,000 for a 1995 M-reg 3.0i V6 Elite five-door estate.



The S40 will be prepared by Damon Hill's new boss

It's another exciting Volvo

THE VOLVO 850, which has become such a familiar star on touring-car racetracks is to give way to a racing version of the stylish new S40 model, writes Alan Capps. The 850, in the hands of Swedish driver Rickard Rydell, won four races in the British Touring Car Championship this year to give him third place in the drivers' contest and Volvo third place in the manufacturers' title. Frank Biela and Audi won the two championships.

THE RACING 850 has been a key element in the company's successful campaign to transform its image from supplier of staid estates to creator of exciting road cars. Like the 850, the racing version of the highly-praised S40 will be prepared at Linfield in Oxfordshire by Tom Walkinshaw, the racing specialist who also owns the Arrows Formula One team and has just become Damon Hill's new boss.



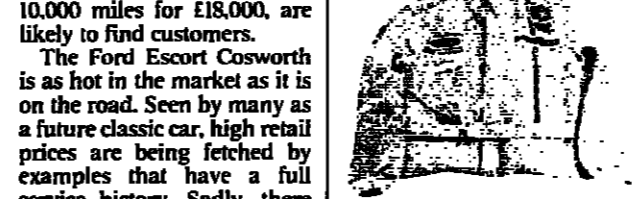
Showing strongest used prices is the BMW 3-Series of 1992-95. High-mileage examples especially (60,000 to 100,000 miles) are doing best, with a 1993 L-reg 318i SE fetching £10,100. A must for buyer or seller is a full service history stuffed with BMW stamps. Metallic paint is another feature which will ensure a strong resale value.

Another German fetching good prices is the Mercedes-Benz E-Class. A 1995 E230 Elegance on 10,000 miles will fetch £29,995 retail, and desperate dealers will buy practically anything, regardless of colour or equipment.

Mazda's cute MX-5, despite the onset of autumn, is enjoying a boom, ironically fuelled by the arrival of the Rover MGF. Every magazine report on the Rover car invariably refers, flatteringly, to its MX-5 rival. A 1992-93 car, costing £18,500 when new, will sell for £13,000, with the Special Edition leather, wood and carpeted versions, most sought after. Not doing so well is the

Honda Shuttle people carrier. Despite top-class reliability and build quality, the Shuttle simply is not popular, largely because its high new price of around £24,000 is reflected in used values. Only used examples at under £20,000, such as the 1995 2.2-litre Shuttle on 10,000 miles for £18,000, are likely to find customers.

The Ford Escort Cosworth is as hot in the market as it is on the road. Seen by many as a future classic car, high retail prices are being fetched by examples that have a full service history. Sadly, there are few around in pristine condition. Long top of the thief's hit list, many have been recovered damaged after being stolen or, having proved too potent for their owner, repaired after an accident. A good-condition 1995 M-registered car with leather upholstery, low mileage and FSH, should fetch £24,000.



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BMW

525TDS SE
Touring auto, 94M, Cosmos Silver leather, air, cruise, FSH, 23 K. £21,500.
Tel: 0181 5566203.

635 CSi
Auto Highline, F reg, Silver metallic, black hide, ABS, air cond, sports seats, electronic SW, 84, 180, alloy, computer, full spec, 1994, YES, ONLY 10,500 MILES.
£17,995 ono.
Tel: 0171 387 3351 day (Guy)

316i SE COMPACT
Auto 96N, 5,000 miles, FSH, air con, CD, ESR, reversing aid, blue metallic, 2 years warranty.
£215,250 ono.
Tel: 0181 2033139 Day/Even. No Canvassers

316i TOURING
1992 Blue, auto, 24,000 miles, FSH, CD player, PAS, disc, sunroof & windows, clocking, alarm, excellent condition, £8,750 for quick sale.
Tel: 0171 278 3331 Mr Sikorski.

325 SE
Silver, Dec 92, 62,000 miles, Air con, many extras.
£12,750 ono.
Tel: 01733 371177 (O) or 01733 243144 (O)

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93L, Laguna Green, Natural Hide, Air Con, Cruise Control, Front Air Bags, On Board Computer, 6 Spoke Alloy, 1 Owner, 64,000 miles, FBMVSH £17,995 (including 1 year warranty) MILDWAY BMW SPECIALISTS 0171 241 1539 0171 254 4765

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10



Age Group	Percentage
18-29	85%
30-49	80%
50-69	75%
70+	65%

177

1994

11/27/78

1

2

فلنأخذ من الأصل

CAR... TOONS



Downing Street chef Clare Latimer tells Andrew Pierce of her punishment in store for road polluters

Top cook's recipe for greens

STEERING COLUMN

Clare Latimer, best known as the Downing Street chef, has cooked for most of the Tory ministers gathered in Bournemouth this weekend for the last party conference before the General Election. In 1993 she became famous for not having an affair with John Major, winning libel damages from *New Statesman* and *Society*. Latimer still creates culinary masterpieces for John and Norma Major, is employed by Conservative Central Office, and provides the food at 11 and 12 Downing Street, as well as the grander Foreign Office parties. She was brought up in a theatrical family, and launches her third culinary guide, *The Comfort Food Cookbook*, next month.

Surprisingly, perhaps, Clare hates talking about politics. "It is very personal and gets heated. People imagine I know a lot because I work in Downing Street so frequently."

How did you first learn to drive?

I was lucky enough to spend most of my childhood on a farm with a one-mile drive. It meant that I could learn when I was only 13. I passed my driving test within weeks of turning 17. My independence started from that moment.

What was your first car?

I bought a pale grey Mini for £200. I decided to make it different by painting the roof primrose. I did this near the farm animals. Within half-an-hour the roof looked like one of those flying strips.

What car do you drive now and why?

A Toyota Celica I have had ten years. I wish I could find a replacement but nothing is right.

Do you like driving?

Yes, except in London. Beyond the M25, driving is my hobby but in London I try to walk or cycle.



Clare Latimer with Toyota Celica and Tansy, her collie-cross who leaves an unfortunate coat of hair for front-seat passengers

What is your dream car?

For the last 30 years it has been an Aston Martin convertible. Christmas is coming up if anyone needs help with my present.

What is your most hated car?

Any which belches out filthy exhaust fumes. The driver should be fined on the spot and made, as a punishment, to ride a bicycle for a year to see what the fumes taste like.

What is your worst habit in the car?

I keep letting Tansy, my collie-cross dog, sit in the front seat. When smartly dressed friends ask

for a lift my heart sinks. They always get out of the car with a fur coat on their backs, but as it is behind them I say nothing.

What infuriates you most about other drivers?

Many things, as the roads are too crowded, but the worst are the messenger bikes that weave in and out of the traffic and the cars that overtake on the left.

What is the most unusual thing you have done in your car?

About ten years ago, when I was working as weekend chef to the Lola Formula 3000 motor racing team at Spa in Belgium. I took my

Renault Fuego round twice. It was a great experience and even though I was going half the speed of the racing cars it felt terrifying.

Have you ever had points on your licence?

Yes. About 20 years ago I was stopped on the M5 on the way to Cornwall and was caught doing 92mph. I am rather proud today of managing such a speed so long ago. It is the only time so far I have been booked, fingers crossed.

What do you listen to in the car?

Classic FM when I need calming down. Fleetwood Mac's *Formula One* theme tune. *Break the Chain*, when I need revving up, or *Nelly*

the Elephant when I need to revive my sense of humour.

If you were Secretary of State for Transport, what is the first thing you would do?

Abolish car tax and add a few pence on the price of petrol. Cars would have to show their insurance certificate on the windscreen.

What is your favourite car advertisement?

So many of them say nothing about the car. How many of us drive round mountains all day, through burning fields, into the sitting room to watch telly, or cut our clothes into rags? What are they trying to say?

DR DASHBOARD

Buy your own meals on wheels

Amazing what you find in your car. I pushed a little button on my dashboard the other day and these little cupholder things popped out. What are they for?

For your leisure revolution, of course. You probably haven't realised it, but the carmakers say that you didn't just buy your hatchback to pick up the kids from school or go to the shops. You really want to exploit what Ford calls your "attitudinal mindset" so that your car meets your lifestyle demands. So your car gets a cupholder.

Oh! Is any of this supposed to make sense. I suspect you keep supplies of medicinal gin in your cupholder. Don't you?

Don't be ridiculous. I would never drink and drive - it's hard enough to drink and walk. No, the carmakers spend a lot of time worrying about these tiny details, spending millions of pounds deciding where to put a cupholder so you don't spill your refreshing cola: the new Renault Scenic, tested elsewhere in this esteemed journal, has six cupholders and two in-flight food trays.

So I could throw a dinner party picnic in the back of the car - a sort of Nineties-style meals-on-wheels affair.

I do the jokes in this column! However, you are not so far from the truth there. Two Americans suggested a few years ago drivers could cook entire meals by wrapping food in tin foil and placing it on the engine.

Astonishing. How does it work? Is it easy to cook anything from gourmet meals to TV dinners under the bonnet?

I suppose you put your food on the manifold, set off for a spot on the map and cook at gas mark 70mph. By the way, this is one time you can't cook electric because a battery car will not generate enough heat, so you can't be environmentally friendly and hungry at the same time, for this idea.

You really are no help for a doctor, are you? Is there any useful advice you can give to Britain's motorists on this subject?

Actually, yes. Those Americans wrote a book called *Manifold Destiny - The One! The Only! Guide to Cooking on Your Car Engine*. Your chances of buying it here are slim unless you order from a specialist bookshop. It was published by Villard Books in the USA. But if you're hungry, you can join me in the pub for egg and chips if you like. Bring your own cupholders though.

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M reg, 19K miles, Silver/Black leather, a/c, sports seats, 17" alloys, wind deflector, CD. £55,000

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Phone Richard on 0115 9313312 (Home) 0115 9610469 (Work) 0378 234368 (Mobile)

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Tel: 01472 750480.

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P reg, Emerald Green, 4,000 miles, as new. £36,750.

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RANGE ROVER

VOGUE

SE, G Reg, Excellent, Auto, All Electrical Extras, Leather, Side Runners, AC, 80,000, £10,500.

Telephone: 01245 348500 or 0802 811211

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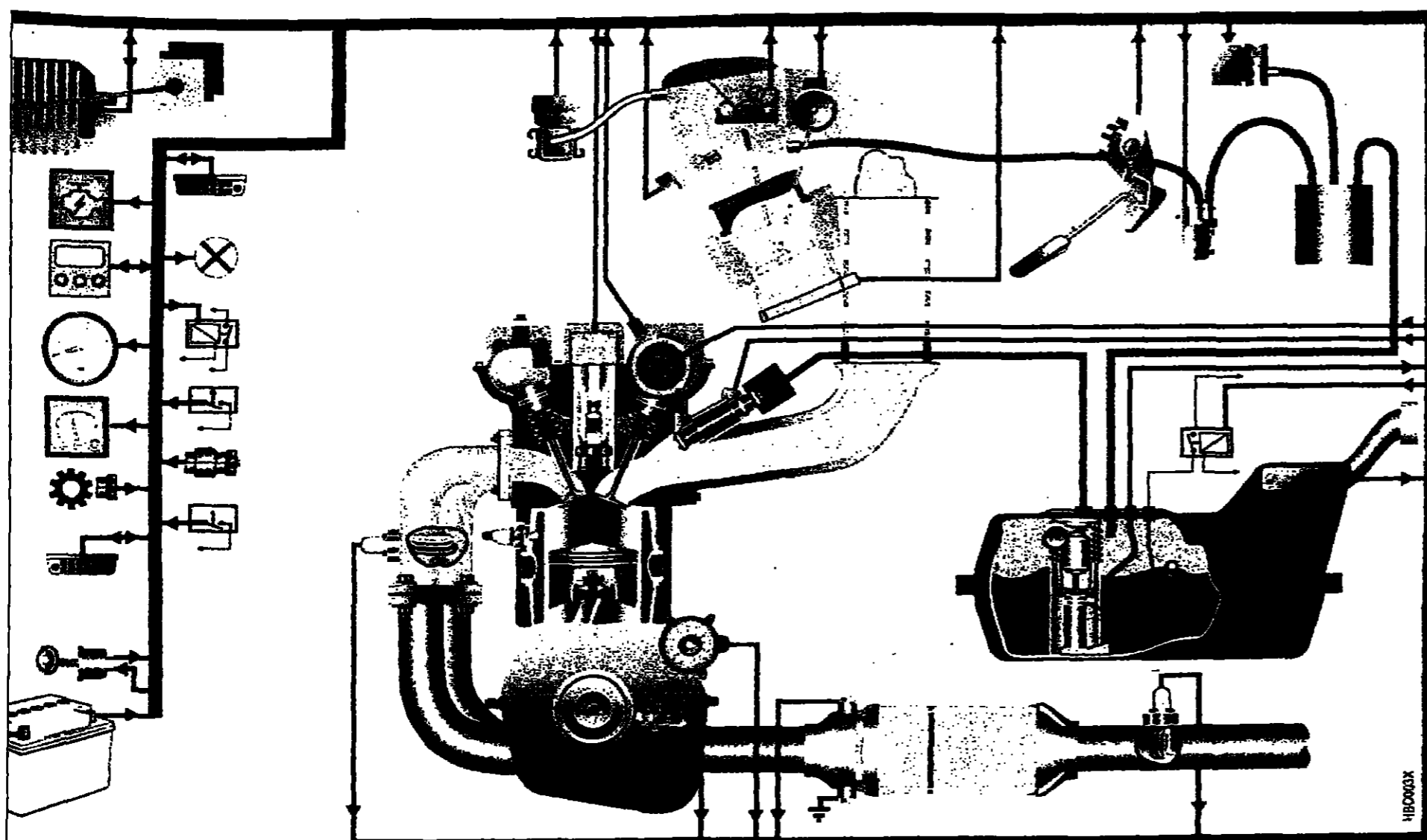
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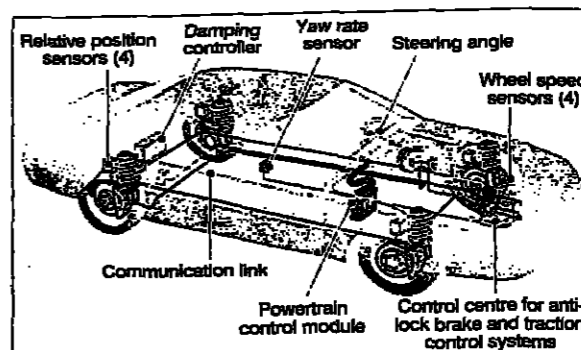
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Alan Copps reports how new-generation technology is making motoring significantly safer and cleaner



INTELLIGENT CHASSIS CONTROL

Anti-spin gives more than an even brake in a crisis



The system uses many existing car components

I won't spin the car completely because I'm going to be doing this demonstration all day and I don't want to wreck the tyres," said my driver as he set off to demonstrate the virtues of Traxxar, Delphi's "intelligent chassis control system", which is designed to enhance safety in all conditions.

We were heading across the asphalt acres of Mortefontaine at about 50mph. A few seconds later he wrenched the steering wheel violently to the right simulating an attempt to avoid a collision. In a split-second of screaming, smoking rubber the Saab 9000 pirouetted through a full 360 degrees.

"Now, that was with the system switched off. It will help show you the contrast," he laughed. With the system on, we approached a row of cones across. He wrenched the wheel to the right. Yes, the car lurched; the tyres squealed, the brakes were firmly on. But he completed the manoeuvre keeping full control and the car emerged

from the "emergency" steady and straight. Traxxar is already in use in the United States and is expected in Europe very soon. It is one of a series of safety measures that can be introduced using many existing components on a car. For example, it uses the same set of sensors as an anti-lock braking system.

The version fitted to the Saab worked by comparing the yaw rate of the car (the way in which it sways about its centre of gravity) with the driver's movement of the steering wheel. It then varies the engine's power and can selectively apply individual brakes to maintain maximum stability.

For example, if a driver is accelerating into a left-hand turn, the system might apply the left front brake to maintain a stable direction, and reduce power. It can be tuned to take account of a car's intended performance, so it might allow more leeway in a sports car than in a family saloon.

Emissions impossible?

Smart cats are set to become the heart of tomorrow's green engines

By the year 2000, your car will need not just a catalytic converter but an array of gadgets to check that the catalyst is working correctly and warn the driver if anything goes wrong with it.

Converters may have contributed to reducing pollution so far, but in the second wave of controls on emissions, already drawn up in California for introduction in 1997 and due to become mandatory in Europe in 2000, the demands placed on them will be much greater.

There are two problems with converters in their present form: they are delicate pieces of equipment slung vulnerably beneath the car and therefore easily damaged; and they take some minutes to warm up and become fully effective. Some critics claim this makes them virtually useless on short urban journeys.

At present a 40-second delay

is allowed between start-up and the collection of exhaust gases to check the efficiency of a converter. Under the new rules, converters will be required to operate immediately and they will also have to be constantly monitored so drivers can be warned immediately if they lose effectiveness.

The technology to meet these demands already exists. It featured among a number of developments — which can be expected to appear in production cars very soon — demonstrated by Delphi Automotive Systems, the world's largest supplier of car components and part of the General Motors empire, at its first European Ride and Drive day at the French motor industry's Mortefontaine test track.

One of the more surprising vehicles to find at such an event was a Lotus Esprit V8. But this product of Norfolk is one of the vehicles on the road which already meets the emission standards for 2000, demonstrating conclusively that an environmentally friendly car does not have to be a dull passenger transport.



Lotus's Esprit V8 already meets stringent 21st-century exhaust laws. But dull it isn't

When Lotus set about designing its all-new engine, it built in features that would allow the exhaust system to be adapted to meet not only the emission standards but also the demands for monitoring, known by the clumsy acronym

of EOBD — European On-Board-Diagnostics. The V8 uses a number of Delphi components, chiefly a valve which recirculates exhaust gas into the engine intake, increasing fuel economy and reducing nitrogen oxide emissions. It also has Mueltec fuel injectors designed to meet high-performance requirements. The Lotus was there to demonstrate, convincingly in the hands of its test driver, that such improvements can be made without damaging its sensational performance. But the means of doing this were more easily discernible aboard an Opel Astra fitted with a full version of the emissions and monitoring system.

The first part of the problem was tackled by fitting a small

CLEAN-AIR SOLUTIONS

The system above includes a fuel tank (black, centre right) with evaporative control. The inlet flow (yellow) includes an air-assisted fuel injector, while oxygen sensors monitor the exhaust (red) and heated catalytic converter (orange).

warm-up converter next to the exhaust manifold under the bonnet, where it reaches the right working temperature immediately. When the engine is started a valve opens and directs the exhaust through this converter until the main one has reached working temperature. A by-pass valve then closes off the warm-up converter.

The main converter also has oxygen sensors at each end to monitor its efficiency, and another sensor to detect any engine misfiring. These sensors are connected to the engine management unit. So, for example, if the oxygen sensor at the rear of the converter detects an excess of unburnt hydrocarbons, indicating that the fuel mixture is

too rich, it can instantly restrict flow through the injection system to correct the balance and achieve a "clean burning" mixture. If such corrective action fails it illuminates a dashboard warning light to show the driver he has a faulty catalyst.

An extra device was fitted to the Astra which enabled the engineer in the passenger seat to induce a misfire. A 2 per cent misfire introduced during normal driving was barely perceptible, yet it produced a 50 per cent increase in emissions, illustrating the value of monitoring.

But it is not just the air outside the car that the Delphi engineers have been con-

cerned with keeping clean. Another demonstration car, with air conditioning, was fitted with a pollution sensor mounted against the cabin air inlet. If it registered heavily polluted air, for example if the car was following a smoky lorry, it closed the inlet and automatically switched the unit to recirculate the air already in the cabin. It also had a warning light to indicate when the pollen filter was exhausted. Such a system has already been installed on some 5-Series BMWs.

When the pollution is past, the unit opens the inlet to ensure a renewed supply of fresh air, something which many drivers who take the same precaution manually find it all too easy to forget.

Win a day on the track worth £165

Today *The Times*, in association with Everyman Motor Racing at Mallory Park, offers readers the chance to test their driving skills with a prize worth £165.

The winner can choose from a wide range of driving activities, including racing cars, rally cars, off-road cars, plus he or she can tackle a tank and military vehicles. Two runners-up receive a pair of tickets to any race meeting of their choice — and there are 40 to choose from — at Mallory Park, Leicestershire.

All you have to do to enter is call our competition hotline 0891-405 032 with your answer to the following question:

Who won the 1996 Portuguese Grand Prix? The winners will be chosen at random from all correct entries received by midnight on Wednesday October 9, 1996.

● Catherine Brown, of London, won the test drive competition of September 21.

CALL 0891-405 032

If you would like to enjoy a day out at Mallory Park, call 01455 841 670 for information.



David Rokov from Bracknell, Berkshire, heads our leaderboard in the race for our £10,000 jackpot after the performance of his team, Richie's Terrors, in the Portuguese Grand Prix at Estoril. Mr Rokov has a total of 7,970 points with one race to go at Suzuka, Japan, on October 13. Below are the top 18 positions after the 14 races in our competition. The Australian Grand Prix does not count in our game.

F1 FANTASY DRIVE LEADERBOARD AFTER 14 RACES

01 7,970 ROKOV16	D Rokov	06 7,885 The Simpletons	M Sim
02 7,931 Aces	D Maynor	06 7,885 Cowgirls Racing	R Wheeler
03 7,920 J Hunt U	J Hunt	06 7,885 Richie's Terrors	J Richardson
04 7,898 Brothers Hotshots	W Lamon	06 7,885 Chicken Roosters	S Maurice
05 7,894 KO16	D Rokov	06 7,885 Dream Team 8	D Springate
06 7,885 Scab Car	R Howells	15 7,852 Locust	C Dare
06 7,885 The Great 8	M Neathan	16 7,839 Del Wall	K Walton
06 7,885 Phoney	D Park	17 7,802 Racing Sheep	S Kempton
06 7,885 Boy Racer 7	J Moore	18 7,801 New Cross Wonders	D Stroud

To improve your team you can change up to four of your drivers on our transfer line below (Republic of Ireland 004 499 010 032). Only one call is allowed in the transfer period. More than one call will invalidate your transfers. Transfers must result in a team comprising one driver from each of the eight groups.

CALL 0891-405 032 UNTIL NOON THURSDAY OCTOBER 10

CHECK YOUR SCORE

Players can check the scores and positions of their teams by calling the hotline number below (Republic of Ireland readers should call 004 499 020 0501). Remember to have your 10-digit PIN number handy when you call. The line currently carries all positions after the Portuguese Grand Prix and will be updated again on Wednesday October 16.

CALL 0891-774 734 24-HRS

0891 calls are charged at 35p per minute cheap rate and 48p per minute at all other times

FANTASY LEAGUE UPDATE

Stars thrash home racers

WHILE ALL eyes will be on the title struggle between Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve at the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka next weekend, one man in the BBC commentary box will be more confident of victory than either of the Williams drivers.

In the CAR 96 Formula One Fantasy Drive Celebri-

ty Team League, Jonathan Palmer enters the final race with an almost unassailable lead of 117 points over his nearest rival Nick Mason of Pink Floyd. If there's anything to be learned from this exercise it seems that a certain amount of track-craft counts. Palmer obviously learned his during a ten-year Formula One career, and rock drummer Mason regularly drives in historic races. Meanwhile, third place is held by Stirling Moss.

The Palmer Promosport team of Hill, Villeneuve, Hakkinen, Barrichello, Salo, Panis, Rosset and Badoer has been an impressive 7,798 points, which would put it around 20th in the overall contest. Unfortunately, Palmer's prize is unlikely to match the £10,000 jackpot on offer to our main winner.

Mason's Ten Tenth team has the same drivers in every category except for World Champion Michael Schumacher in place of Damon Hill, and has accumulated 7,681 points.

The Stirling Moss Automobile Racing Team of Hill, Villeneuve, Hakkinen, Brundie, Salo, Panis, Rosset and Montterni is on 7,469. Since the maximum points scored by any driver in any race has rarely exceeded 120, and because the leading teams are so similar the chance of these positions changing seems slim. The rest of our contestants in order are: Louise Aitken Walker, 7,441 points; Sir David Steel, 7,217; Tess Stimson, 6,949; Chris Rea, 6,923; Carol Vorderman, 6,901; Lord March, 6,234 and, gentlemanly as always and allowing our distinguished guests to go ahead, Team Car 96 (Kevin Eason and Alan Copps) on 6,068 points.

Perhaps Damon Hill might take some comfort from the fact that the team at the bottom of that list was the only one to select at the beginning of the season Heinz-Harald Frentzen, the German driver who is to supplant him at Williams next season.



Jonathan Palmer has taken a significant lead

GT RACING COMPETITION

Win Silverstone tickets



The hard and fast Privilege Insurance GT races feature close cousins of road cars

One of the most exciting and spectacular forms of motor sport, GT racing, has made a worldwide comeback in the past few seasons, and next Saturday sees the final round of the British Championship at Silverstone. Today, CAR 96, in association with Privilege Insurance, sponsors of the eight-race series, offers readers a chance to win ten pairs of VIP race tickets.

The Privilege GT championship is the compact version of Le Mans racing. It features not only the big guns of McLaren, Porsche and Jaguar but a whole host of British specialist manufacturers such as Marcos, TVR and Harrier. Its class structure was changed this year to fall in line with the famous French 24-hour race and the Global GT series.

The British races have been dominated by the 600bhp McLaren F1 GT of Ian Flux and Jake Ulrich who have a commanding lead in the championship after winning a series of duels with the Porsche 993 GTI of John Greasley and

John Morrison. But the McLaren team has also experienced some stirring battles against surprising opposition. The Marcos LM500 of Cor Euser and Thomas Erdos, which won the first race at Silverstone in March, has twice beaten the mighty F1 and there have also been overall victories for Win Percy in the Harrier LR9C, Frenchman Marc Sourd in a Renault Spider V6 and the TVR Cerbera of Mark Hales and Phil Andrews. The Marcos LM600 of Schirle and Warnock leads the Class Two championship.

The attraction of this class of racing is that most of the cars are closely related to roadgoing versions, and the close racing on tight circuits makes a dramatic spectacle. Each 45-minute race must include one pit stop for a driver change. The series this year has attracted coverage from Sky Sports and Eurosport, and Privilege is planning to continue its sponsorship next season.

Jim Wallace, Marketing Director for Privilege, says: "This series is the perfect fit

for us. Privilege specialises in providing affordable premiums to drivers who traditionally find insurance either difficult or expensive to arrange." Those include drivers of sports, high performance or luxury cars, the young and those with a bad driving record.

The prizes are ten pairs of tickets to the Silverstone race on October 13, to include a three-course lunch and hospitality in the Jimmy Brown suite which overlooks the pit lane and will include access to the pits.

For your chance to win, call our hotline on 0839 444 519 before midnight on Monday, October 7, with your answer to this question:

Who won the first race of the 1996 Privilege GT series?

The ten winners will be selected at random from all correct entries received by the closing date. Normal Times Newspapers competition rules apply. Calls cost (per minute) 39p cheap rate, 49p at all other times. Privilege Hotline: 0800 301 941

Awards judge Sue Baker explains the tough tests vehicles face in the search for the caravanner's best car

Hunt is on for the best tow-job

An outrageous squealing of tyres rent the air. One car was hurtling through a tight series of bends. Another was powering round a steep banked curve into a fast straight stretch of Tarmac.

The location was a test track, and cars were being put punishingly through their paces. What was unusual about this particular test session was that in the wake of every hard-driven car was a caravan. The vehicles undergoing rigorous assessment were contenders for the Caravan Club's Towcar of the Year awards, being judged by a heavy-footed panel of drivers.

The annual awards decide which cars new on the market in the past year deserve accolades as best suited to the controversial task of lugging caravans about the country. The Caravan Club has been running the competition for 14 years for the enlightenment of its 285,000 members.

The judging is performed over two days at a Surrey test track every September, in preparation for an awards ceremony in London during October. This year, 39 cars from 19 manufacturers were vying for trophies. I drove them all. I am one of the judges.

Admitting to the fact requires a thick skin and a modicum of

bravado. Saying that you evaluate cars for their proficiency at towing caravans is akin to admitting to being Jeremy Clarkson's hairdresser, or a Val Doonican fan, or someone who irons their jeans.

For caravanners, derision is a familiar experience. But I make no apology for my involvement in the towcar competition. As an exercise in car assessment, it is both rewarding and revealing, on several counts.

Driving a car with a caravan hooked up behind magnifies its inherent characteristics. A car which tows well has a fundamental engineering integrity, thus indicating a tendency to behave creditably in most other situations.

Equally, few mechanical or behavioural flaws escape scrutiny when a lump weighing nearly as much again as the car towing it is being hauled along behind, especially when the car is being driven as energetically as typically happens during towcar judging.

There's the rub. The soundly competent behaviour of most properly matched, modern car-trailer rigs when being driven at an unusually pressurised pace is telling. It shows that there is no cause for caravans to be driven like the lumbering mobile chicanes which anecdotally hinder and infuriate

other traffic during the congested holiday season.

The tests each competing car undergoes are extensive. They are assessed for their acceleration from a standing start and between 30 and 60mph, the overtaking zone; for stability at speed; for their clean pull-away from a steep hill-start and the ability of the handbrake to hold the rig on the same slope.

Traction, gearbox suitability, brakes, handling and manoeuvring, driver ergonomics, operating costs and value for money within a price class are all judged, in a total of 11 categories with up to 21 points awarded by each judge in each category.

Cars are also assessed for their practical suitability for caravanning, such as access to the boot when hitched, and whether commonly used equipment can be stowed upright inside the car. To put the cars being judged for the towcar awards on an even playing field, all the caravans used in the tests are ballasted to bring their weight to precisely 85 per cent of that of the car under test.

The car's tyre pressures are increased in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendation for towing, and concrete blocks are placed in the front footwell to represent a passenger's weight.



Sue Baker: a proud towcar judge, despite the derision heaped upon caravanners, as the rigorous tests can expose any car's flaws

Towcar judges drive alone, but few caravanners do.

Caravanners may be the continual butt of mirth, but judging the towcar awards is no joke. It is as scientific as the organisers can make it, and the results pay tribute to the integrity of the winning cars.

One of the reasons underlying caravanning's slightly tainted reputation may well be the inexperience of some people new to towing,

who try to pull oversized vans with undersized cars. Another may be due to those who take to the road without having mastered the back-to-front art of reversing a towed rig.

There is no excuse for caravanners to be a pain in the back lanes and an irritation to other road users. The Caravan Club runs courses to guide novices through the more demanding intricacies of caravan management, towing and

manoeuvring. They are invaluable for anyone who wants to start towing from scratch, or whose skills are frankly rusty and need brushing up.

This year's towcar results will be revealed in mid-October. The winners are the ones that towed unflinchingly despite brutal treatment on widely varied terrain, that didn't stumble, stall or overheat the clutch on a steep hillstart, and that

endeared themselves for generally good, safe, efficient behaviour.

They are an elite bunch of cars whose success in the awards will be trumpeted by car manufacturers. There are an estimated 500,000 trailer caravans in Britain, and they all need towcars.

© The Caravan Club, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 1UA. Tel 01342 326944

Helen Mound meets Renault's family activity vehicle

It was like watching Paul Daniels do his stuff with a magic hat: this Renault PR man kept pulling bicycles, toys and bottles from the new Scenic, demonstrating the car's numerous pockets and hideaways. The resulting pile of one family's paraphernalia from one Scenic would have been enough to stock a small toyshop.

The new Scenic is the latest in Renault's six-car Megane range, the hatchback and coupé were launched in April this year, the saloon is out next year, the cabriolet the following year and the estate in 1998.

But this is the answer to the prayers of any family driver who never has enough storage space in the car. It's best described as an automotive activity centre: just discovering all the cubbyholes and drinks holders is an adventure in itself. If Fisher Price turned it's hand to car production this could well be the result.

Renault is looking to create yet another sector in the European market with the Scenic, as it did with the Espace in 1984. But Renault UK marketing director Phil Horton insists that the new car

Car that wants to come out to play

is not just a miniaturised MPV. "We don't consider the Scenic a niche product to be sold to the adventurous few. A car with so many attributes will not be a niche vehicle. It will appeal to mainstream customers. It's a realistic alternative to a family hatchback."

To get away from the image of miniature-MPV, Renault rather appropriately refers to the Scenic as an "activity car". Horton argues: "We see this as potentially the biggest change in the UK marketplace since the launch of the hatchback in the 1960s."

That is not the only bold remark that Renault UK is making about the new Scenic either. Despite the fact that the company refuses to talk sales figures or market shares, it sees the activity car as a "volume opportunity" and expects it to be the second best-selling Megane.

One way it claims that it will achieve high sales is with competitive pricing. Horton points out the average price of a car in the UK is £13,200, and the average price of an MPV is a steep £19,200. He says that the type of motorist that Renault is looking to attract will be reflected in the pricing of the vehicle.

"We're not looking to attract estate car or MPV drivers, we want to convince hatchback drivers this is the car they need." A top luxury-equipped Scenic is estimated to cost around £15,000.

The customer profile he is aiming for is also bold: "All age-groups, one-car families, singles and couples with and without children." That just about covers everybody.

Renault is the doyen of what is known as "monospace" vehicles; cars with a single



The Scenic, below right, is the latest Megane, and is intended to create its own market

interior space. As well as the highly popular Espace (which is about to show a new face), Renault also sells the diminutive Twingo in France.

And if the new Scenic is creating a whole new market for activity vehicles, the new Espace looks set to take the MPV market to new heights. Unveiled this week at the Paris Motor Show, Renault's new Espace is a highly futuristic-looking vehicle that is scheduled to go on sale in Britain next year.

Renault chairman Louis Schweitzer happily points out that the company is planning

to create and dominate a new market with the Scenic, as it did with the Espace. "Soon, almost every manufacturer will have a mid-range monospace, but for the next two years at least, Scenic will have no rivals in Europe."

The Scenic may look a very different car, but anyone who's ever driven an Espace is going to feel at home in a Scenic. The new car has the high seat and right-angled driving position of the original MPV, which can be tiring on the knees and ankles.

Despite concerted attempts to make the Scenic as car-like

as possible, Renault still hasn't achieved the more laid-back, legs-stretched-out driving position most motorists favour. Nevertheless, the pedals are light, the seats supportive, the steering precise and the gearchange reasonably slick, so there's little else to wear the driver out.

Best of all, the Scenic has a more familiar dashboard, having come straight from the Megane hatchback; it doesn't have the vast expanse of plastic that spreads out in front of the driver and front passenger in most MPVs.

The difference between the

SCENIC

Range: 1.6-litre (90 brake-horsepower); 2-litre (115bhp) and 1.9-litre turbodiesel (95bhp).

Performance: 1.6; top speed 106mph, fuel consumption 31.7mpg driving in town, 35.8mpg at constant 75mph; 2-litre 115mph, fuel 26.4mpg driving in town, 31.7mpg at 75mph; diesel, 108mph, fuel 36.7mpg driving in town, 40.9mpg at 75mph.

Estimated price: £15,000.

Available: February next year.

Rivals: Toyota Picnic, Citroën Berlingo Multispace.

Scenic and an ordinary hatchback is its extensive interior space and convenient features such as underfloor storage compartments; interchangeable rear seats; a parcel shelf that can take the weight of a large aquarium; and the mix-and-match coloured seats (although Renault UK is still

deciding whether it is to include those).

In total, its features comprise 12 pockets, six storage compartments (three of them underfloor), two light trays on the back of rear seats, six drinks holders, and three individual removable rear seats with adjustable legroom. There are also two bottle holders, a map-reading light and a 120-watt power socket under the rear seats.

The centre rear seat can be turned into a table or replaced with a child box, and with centre seat removed, the outer rear seats can be moved to allow for more elbow room. The rear parcel shelf has two height positions, and can also be placed flat on the boot floor.

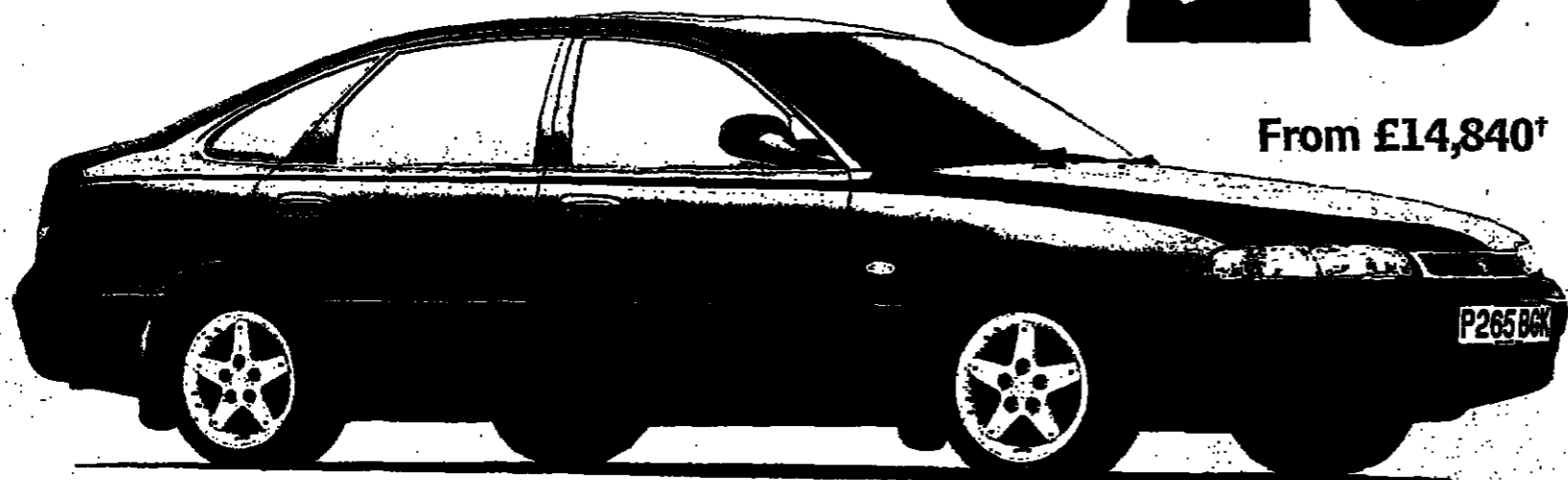
The difference between the Scenic and an Espace is its smaller exterior dimensions. Renault has virtually maintained the length and width of the Megane hatchback, but increased the height by 18cms. The Scenic has the headroom and high seat position of an MPV, but it carries five passengers instead of seven, and fits the same parking space as a mid-range car.

Surely all of that adds up to a miniaturised-MPV? But please don't tell Renault UK I said so.

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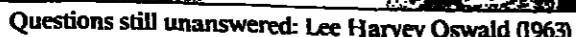
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RANGE/BETTMANN



work that is by any standards extraordinary for its tenderness, empathy and imagination. It follows Oswald through the US Marines, his expatriate years under KGB surveillance in Russia, his marriage to Marina in Minsk, his return to America and the confused events leading to his fatal appointment with history on November 22, 1963. The research of this documentary novel is daunting, using interviews with Oswald's family, reports from the KGB, the Warren report and Lee's own letters to create a portrait of an ambitious and deceitful man. Finally Oswald remains an enigma but that's the way Maier likes him. Much more than a novel, an epic and penetrating investigation.

Contributors: Fanny Blake, Ross Leckie, Tom Newton Dunn,
Victoria Walker, Alison Burns.



London: a chance to enjoy the storytelling (for all ages) and the literary activities which are taking place all day today as part of Children's Book Week

CHILDREN

LONDON
Children's Book Week
All-day literary activities and storytelling for children of all ages.
Voice Box, Festival Hall, South Bank, SE1 (0171-960 4242). Today, phone for details: £2.50.

The Lazy Daisy Show
Circus acts, magic and audience participation. For three-year-olds and above.

Jackson's Lane Community Centre, Archway Road, N6 (0181-341 4421). Today, 11am and 2pm: £3.

The Last Rainforest
The excellent Jacinto Visual Theatre presents a series of rainforest adventures. For four-year-olds and above.
Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn High Road, NW6 (0171-328 1000). Today, 11.30am and 2pm: £3, concs £2.

Pollo and the Star Fairies
Puppet fun with the innovative

Nomad Puppet company, Upper Tooting Road, SW17 (0181-767 4005). Tomorrow, 11.30am and 2pm: £2.50.

Under My Sink
Peer under the sink and find out what lurks there in this puppet performance.
Polka Theatre for Children, The Broadway, SW19 (0181-543 4888). Today, 12.30pm and 2.30pm: £4.

Zippo's Circus
New circus entertainment

featuring some fine horse acts.
Peckham Rye Park, SE15 (0374 811 811). Today, 2.30pm, 5pm and 7.30pm, tomorrow, 11am and 2.30pm: £3.50-£8.50.

REGIONAL

BIRMINGHAM
The Warley National Model Railway Exhibition
Model railway show for family and general enthusiasts.
National Exhibition Centre, (0121-780 4133). Today, 10am-7pm, tomorrow, 10am-5pm: £6, two-day ticket £9.

HIGH WYCOMBE

The Witches
Roald Dahl's tale is adapted for the stage.
Wycombe Swan, St Mary Street (01494 512000). Today, 11am, 2pm and 7pm: £7.50-£10.50.

NEWCASTLE
Children's Gallery
Collection of toys, games and art for the under-fives.
Laird Art Gallery, Highgate Place (0191-232 7734). Today, 10am-5pm, tomorrow, 2-5pm; free.

CLASSICAL

LONDON
Holst Singers
Charity event featuring Eastern European and Russian sacred music.
Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Moscow Road, W2 (0171-229 8168). Tonight, 7.30pm: £10.

James Lisney
Chopin works, including the Funeral March Sonata.
Purcell Room, South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-960 4242). Tonight, 7.30pm: £10.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

JESSY NORMAN
Jessy Norman does not often appear in Britain so the opportunity to hear the great American soprano will be eagerly seized, even with high ticket prices. Her voice is still a glorious instrument but is it always perfectly controlled? Is her diction all it should be? Critics will argue, but music-lovers will flock to hear a genuine world-class diva.

RICHARD MORRISON
Festival Hall, South Bank, London SE1 (0171-960 4242). Tomorrow, 5pm: £8-£50.

Nash Ensemble
Works by Rossini, Ravel, Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky.
Wigmore Hall, Wigmore Street, W1 (0171-935 2141). Tonight, 7.30pm: £6-£14.

New Queen's Hall
Orchestra/Maguire
Mahler's Fourth Symphony and Elgar's Cello Concerto on period instruments.
Barbican, Silk Street, EC2 (0171-638 8891). Tomorrow, 7.30pm: £7-£20.



London: Jessy Norman

REGIONAL

BASINGSTOKE
London Mozart Players/Barnett
John Field's Fourth Piano Concerto and Mozart's Symphony No 39.
The Anvil, Churchhill Way (01256 844244). Tomorrow, 7.45pm: £8.50-£18.50.

HADDINGTON
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Brabbins
Benjamin Britten's Les Illuminations song cycle, and Mahler's Fourth Symphony.
St Mary's Parish Church, (01620 823738). Tonight, 7.30pm: £10, concs £5.

ST ANDREWS
Scottish Chamber Orchestra/Svensson
Sally Beamish's new work.
Younger Hall, University of St Andrews, North Street (01334 474610). Tonight, 7.45pm: £4.50-£13.

JAZZ

LONDON
Freddie Cole Trio
Nat King Cole's little brother sings and plays.
Café Royal, Regent Street, W1 (0171-437 9090). Tonight, 8pm: £25.

Blossom Dearie
Squeaky-voiced, diminutive American chanteuse.
University College School Theatre, Froggnal, NW3 (0171-435 2215). Tomorrow, 7.45pm: £8.

Dennis Rollins's Dee Dee
Jazz, ska and funk trombonist leads this octet.
Jazz Café, Parkway, NW1 (0171-344 0044). Tonight, 7pm: £9.

Georgie Fame, Dale Barlow
Soul-jazz organ legend, moving into mainstream.
Ronnie Scott's, Frith Street, W1 (0171-439 0747). Tonight, 9pm: £15.

Clyde Stubblefield
James Brown's iconic and much-sampled Funky Drummer continues his gigs and workshops.

12 Bar Club, Denmark Street, WC2 (0171-916 6959). Tonight, tomorrow, 8pm: £10.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

HARRY ALLEN AND MICHAEL HASHIM
Call them young fogies, if you wish, but American saxophonists Harry Allen and Michael Hashim make a compelling double-act. Allen, a mellow tenor player in the Ben Webster mould explores the ballad tradition on his new album, *Blue Skies*, while Hashim takes the vintage sound of Johnny Hodges and other swing giants and adds a dash of showmanship.

CLIVE DAVIS
Soho Jazz Festival, Pizza Express, Dean Street, W1 (0171-439 8722) tonight, 9pm: £15.

Mike and Kate Westbrook, Ed Jones
Quintet, Ascension
Soho Jazz Festival triple bill: bandleader, pianist and composer Mike Westbrook duets with torch-singer wife Kate, plus saxophonist Ed Jones and Steve Plews's freestyle orchestra.
Ronnie Scott's, Frith Street, W1 (0171-439 0747). Tomorrow, 8pm: £8.

REGIONAL

BIRMINGHAM
Tim Garland Quartet
Barnstorming multi-reedist, with drummer Winston Clifford, guitarist Phil Robson and bassist Laurence Cottle.
The Custard Factory, Gibbs Street (0121-604 7777). Tonight, 8pm: £5.

BRIGHTON
Martin Taylor's Spirit of Django
Gypsy jazz guitarist features saxist Dave O'Higgins and accordionist Jack Embrow.
Sallis Benney Theatre, University of Brighton, Grand Parade (01273 709709). Tomorrow, 8pm: £9.

NEWCASTLE
Helen Watson
Folk and blues-edged diva.
Live Theatre, Broad Chare, Quayside (0191-232 1232). Tonight, 8pm: £5-£6.

ST ALBANS
Ray Gaskins
Soul-jazz saxophonist.
Red Note at Maltings Arts Centre, The Maltings (01773 44222). Tonight, 8.30pm: £7.

WELWYN GARDEN CITY

Kay Gelato and Alex Garrett's Tough Tenors
Beefy tenor pairing with pianist Richard Busiakiewicz.
Fairway Suite, Old Hems Lane (01438 717997). Tomorrow, 8pm: £5, mens £4.

OPERA



London: Rosa Mannion

LONDON
Don Giovanni
Sir Georg Solti conducts the London Philharmonic Orchestra in a concert performance of Mozart.
Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-960 4242). Tonight, 7pm: £7-£40.

La Traviata
New English National Opera production, with Rosa Mannion as Violetta, directed by Jonathan Miller.
London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-632 8300). Tonight, 6.30pm: £6.50-£55.

Die Walküre
Richard Jones's production, featuring John Tomlinson as Wotan.
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, WC2 (0171-304 4000). Today, 4pm: £7-£147.50.

REGIONAL

LEEDS
Iphigenia in Aulis
An English sung version of Gluck's opera in a new production.
Grand Theatre, New Briggate (0113-245 9351). Tonight, 7.15pm: £7.50-£38.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

THE DOCTOR OF MYDDFAI
Peter Maxwell Davies's new opera was commissioned by the Welsh National, successfully premiered in the summer and now joins the company's autumn repertoire. Dealing in part with a mysterious disease and a headless European bureaucracy, it shows that the corrupting nature of power never goes away. There is plenty for the WNO Chorus to do, starring roles for Paul Whelan as the Doctor and Gwynne Howell as the Euro-Ruler, and the opera is short, sharp and crisply directed by its librettist, David Pountney. Richard Armstrong is the conductor.

RODNEY MILNES
New Theatre, Park Place, Cardiff (01222 878889). Today, 7.15pm: £8-£45.

DANCE

LONDON
Adventures in Motion
Pictures: Swan Lake
Oliver Award-winning production of Tchaikovsky's ballet choreographed by Matthew Bourne and featuring the acclaimed all-male corps of swans.
Piccadilly Theatre, Denman Street, W1 (0171-369 1734). Today, 2.30pm (Kemp/Wright/Mortimer) and 7.30pm (Cooper/Ambler/Chadwick): £9.50-£30.

Circles in Time
Jak Abduwalia choreographs this innovative work with jazz music from Julian Nicholas.
Jackson's Lane Community Centre, Archway Road, N6 (0181-341 4421). Tonight, 8pm: £6.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

RICHARD ALSTON DANCE COMPANY
Earlier this year Richard Alston choreographed to Harrison Birtwistle. Now, as part of the Dance Umbrella festival, his Dance Company presents the world premiere of his *Okko*, a piece for five male dancers set to Iannis Xenakis's score for djembes — large African drums played live on stage. The rest of the programme features Darshan Singh Bhuller in *Orpheus Singing and Dreaming* to Birtwistle's score.

DEBRA CRAINE
Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-960 4242). Tonight, tomorrow, 7.45pm: £10-£14, concs £6-£12.

REGIONAL
BELFAST
Anthea Williams: Double Chin and Tonic
Song-and-dance inspired by the 1930s and 1940s, helped by complimentary gin and tonics in the interval.
Old Museum Arts Centre, College Square North (01232 235053). Tonight, 8pm: £6, concs £3.

CHELMSFORD
European Ballet: Carmen Love, passion and murder choreographed by Stanislav Tchassov.
Civic Theatre, Fairfield Road (01245 495028). Tomorrow, 7.30pm: £11-£13, concs £8.50-£10.50.

DUNDEE
Scottish Dance Theatre on Tour
The work of four leading choreographers.
Dundee Repertory Theatre, Tay Square (01382 223530). Tonight, 7.30pm: £6.75.

EDINBURGH
The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago: Billboards
Acclaimed performance set to music by Prince.
Festival Theatre, Nicolson Street (0131-529 6000). Tonight, tomorrow, 8pm, today mat, 2.30pm: £4.50-£19.50.

NOTTINGHAM
Northern Ballet Theatre: Dracula
Bram Stoker's classic story, choreographed by Christopher Gable and Michael Barrett-Pink and set

to a score by Philip Feeney.
Theatre Royal, Theatre Square (0115-948 2626). Today, 2.30pm and 7.30pm: £7.50-£24.

SUNDERLAND
Birmingham Royal Ballet: Swan Lake
Peter Wright and Galina Samsova's production.
Empire Theatre, High Street West (0191-514 2517). Today, 2.30pm and 7.30pm: £10.

POP

LONDON
Fenest Arceneaux and the Thunders
Louisianan creole zydeco star on his first visit to Britain for 15 years.
100 Club, Oxford Street, W1 (0171-636 0933). Tomorrow, 7.30pm: £6.

Bjorn Again
Abba imitators with their own cult following.
Lewisham Theatre, Rushey Green, SE8 (0181-690 0002). Tonight, 8pm: £10.50-£12.50.

David Devant and His Spirit Wife
Quirky pop eccentrics.
The Garage, Highbury Corner, N5 (0171-607 1818). Tonight, 8pm: £5.

Vasmaloni
Hungarian folk music.
Barbican Centre Foyer, Silk Street, EC2 (0171-638 4141). Tonight, 5.20pm; free.



Bristol: Gailiano displays the acid jazz funk crew

REGIONAL

BRISTOL
Gailiano
Acid jazz funk crew.
Anson Rooms, Bristol University, Queens Road (0117-973 5035). Tonight, 7.30pm: £8.50.

CHATHAM
Steve Harley and Cockney Rebel
Seventies pop hero with new album, *Poetic Justice*.
Central Theatre, High Street (01634 403868). Tonight, 7.30pm: phone for ticket prices.

GOSPORT
The Popes
Beery Celtic folk from Shane MacCowan's band.
R&Z Club, The Crossways (01705 349334). Tonight, 8pm: phone for prices.

INVERNESS
Wolfstone
Scottish folk-rockers.
Inverness Ice Centre,

Bught Park (01463 235711). Tonight, 7.30pm; phone for ticket prices.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

THE JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION
Jon Spencer is a punk sex-god from New York with a dishevelled guitar sound and a mad-dog vocal style. He is joined in the aptly named Explosion by guitarist Judah Bauer and drummer Russell Simins. Together they play fast and loose with the blues lexicon, mangled into shape by bizarre influences from Jerry Lee Lewis to the Cramps. They are here to promote a new album, *Now I Got Worries*, scaling new heights of an anarchy-rock'n'roll ecstasy.

DAVID SINCLAIR
Fleece & Firkin
St Thomas Street, Bristol (0117-927 7150). Tonight, 8pm: £7.

Astoria
Charing Cross Road, London WC2 (0171-434 0403). Tomorrow, 8pm: £8.

LEICESTER
The Bluetones, Geneva
Brit-pop guitar band, with support from Scottish newcomers Geneva.
De Montfort Hall, Granville Road (0116-233 3111). Tonight, 7.30pm: £8.50.

NORWICH
Ocean Colour Scene
Sixties-style British R & B-influenced rockers adopted by Paul Weller.
University of East Anglia, The Plain (01603 505401). Tomorrow, 7.30pm: £10.

COMEDY

LONDON
Brick Lane Music Hall Extravaganza
Vincent Chair hosts the event.
Brick Lane Music Hall, Brick Lane, E1 (0171-377 8878/9797). Tonight, 7.30pm: £20 with dinner.

Stand Up for the NHS
Star-studded comedy event including Jo Brand, John Muloney, Arthur Smith and Bill Bailey.
Wimbledon Theatre, The Broadway, SW19 (0181-540 0362). Tomorrow, 7.30pm: £12.50, concs £10.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

PERRIER PICK OF THE FRINGE
In a series of Sunday night double bills, the Perrier Award transfers the best Edinburgh Festival comics to the West End. This weekend you can catch Dominic Holland, the ordinary bloke whose observational wit on the subject of DIY and the price of king prawns is charmingly lively. He is joined by the woolly-looking, slightly wackier American stand-up Rich Hall who explains where all the jokes have gone with a world map and improvises a story incorporating the brand names of chocolate bars.

KATE BASSETT
Her Majesty's, Haymarket, SW1 (0171-494 5415). Tomorrow, 7.30pm: £5-£12.

Victoria Wood
Everyone's favourite.
Albert Hall, Kensington Gore, SW7

(0171-589 8212). Tonight, tomorrow, 8pm: £8.50-£23.50.

REGIONAL

ABERYSTWYTH
Jenny Eclair
The return of the Perrier winner and peroxide queen of the female-centric gag.
Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Penlisa Road (01970 623232). Tonight, 7.30pm: £10.

BIRMINGHAM
Jenny Eclair
See Aberystwyth.
Birmingham Rep, Broad Street (0121-236 4455). Tomorrow, 7.30pm: £10.



London: Arthur Smith stands up for the NHS

COLCHESTER
Scott Capurro
The outrageous American, one of last year's Perrier Award nominees, takes the mike.
Colchester Arts Centre, St Mary-at-the-Walls, Church Street (01206 577301). Tonight, 8pm: £5, concs £4.

LEICESTER
Harry Hill
Saturday Night Live's star does stand-up.
De Montfort Hall, Granville Road (0116-233 3111). Tomorrow, 8pm: £10.

LIVERPOOL
Rhona Cameron
Gaytime TV's Scottish presenter in her first solo show.
Neptune Theatre, Hanover Street (0151-709 7844). Tonight, 8pm: £7, concs £5.

MANCHESTER
Lee Hurst
Television's sporting anti-hero dishes the gags.
Apollo Theatre, Ardwick Green (0161-242 2560). Tomorrow, 8pm: £10, concs £8.

SWANSEA
Lee Hurst
See Manchester.
Grand Theatre, Singleton Street (01792 475715). Tonight, 8pm: £8.50-£10.

SWINDON
Bob Downe
Sing-along and toe-tap with the star who reinvented nylon slacks and hair lacquer.
Wyvern Theatre, Theatre Square (01793 524481). Tonight, 7.30pm: £10.

YORK
Bob Downe
See Swindon.
Grand Opera House, Cumberland Street (01904 671818). Oct 6, 8pm: £8.

STAR-STUDDED FIELD TAKES ON ERNIE

DEFENDING CHAMPION ERNIE ELS FACES THE STRONGEST FIELD IN THE WORLD MATCH PLAY CHAMPIONSHIP'S THIRTY-THREE YEAR HISTORY AS HE STRIVES TO BECOME THE FIRST PLAYER TO WIN THREE YEARS IN A ROW.

THE FIELD INCLUDES THE TOP-5 IN THE US PGA TOUR MONEY LIST: CURRENT LEADER, PHIL MICKELSON; MARK BROOKS, THE US PGA CHAMPION; THE OPEN CHAMPION, TOM LEHMAN; STEVE JONES, THE US OPEN CHAMPION; MARK O'MEARA AND STEVE STRICKER; AND THE TOP-2 ON THE EUROPEAN TOUR, BRITISH STARS COLIN MONTGOMERIE AND IAN WOOSNAM.

ALSO COMPETING WILL BE JAPAN'S PGA MATCH PLAY CHAMPION, NOBUO SERIZAWA; STEVE ELKINGTON, 1995 RUNNER-UP AND THE OUTSTANDING VIJAY SINGH.

CATCH ALL THE ACTION AS ERNIE ATTEMPTS TO MAKE HISTORY IN THE

TOYOTA WORLD MATCH PLAY CHAMPIONSHIP

17-20 OCTOBER 1996
WENTWORTH CLUB, VIRGINIA WATER, SURREY

FOR TICKETS AND FURTHER INFORMATION CALL THE TOYOTA BOX OFFICE ON 0171 344 4444

GOING OUT

GALLERIES

CRITIC'S CHOICE

EVELYN DE MORGAN
Evelyn De Morgan died in 1916, but lived long enough to see her late Pre-Raphaelite style of visionary art go out of fashion. Recently her work has turned up in a number of exhibitions, such as *The Last Romantics* at the Barbican in 1989. She was born in 1855, studied at the Slade, and married the painter and decorative artist William De Morgan. The De Morgans became involved with spiritualism and psychic communication, and much of her art reflects this and was strongly influenced by Burne-Jones. The two exhibitions, of the drawings and the paintings, show she was a brilliant draughtsman, an exquisite colourist, and had a personal vision which survives the vicissitudes of fashion.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR
Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum
East Cliff, Bournemouth (01202 471800). Today and tomorrow, 10am-5pm; free.

LONDON

Blumenfeld: A Fetish for Beauty
Retrospective of the photographer's classic fashion, portraiture and nude images.
Barbican Art Gallery, Silk Street, EC2 (0171-638 4141). Today, 10am-6.45pm; tomorrow, midday-6.45pm; £4.50 (includes entry to Jam).

Antony Gormley: Field for the British Isles
Installation comprising 40,000 individually crafted terracotta figures in a room.
Hayward Gallery, Belvedere Road, SE1 (0171-960 4242). Today, tomorrow, 10am-6pm; £3.



Edinburgh: *St Thomas* by Diego Velázquez, on display at the National Gallery of Scotland

Jam
Multi-media exhibition exploring culture and music.
Barbican Art Gallery, Silk Street, EC2 (0171-638 4141). Today, 10am-6.45pm; tomorrow, midday-6.45pm; £4.50.

BP Portrait Award
Annual open submission portrait show.
National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place, WC2 (0171-306 0055). Today, 10am-6pm; tomorrow, midday-6pm; free.

REGIONAL
BIRMINGHAM
Eve Arnold: In Retrospect
Four decades of the acclaimed Magnum photojournalist's life and work.
Ikon Gallery.

John Bright Street (0121-643 0708). Today, 11am-6pm; free.

COVENTRY
The Director's Eye
European film-makers, their drawings and photographs.
Arts Centre, University of Warwick, (01203 523523 ext 2590). Today, 10am-8pm; free.

DURHAM
Bill Viola
Site-specific installation from the master of the video spectacle.
Durham Cathedral, Palace Green (0191-384 3720/386 4266). Today, tomorrow, phone for times; free.

EDINBURGH
Velázquez in Seville
Series of paintings from Velázquez's formative years.
National Gallery of Scotland, The Mound (0131-556 9921). Today, 10am-5pm, Sun, 2-5pm; £4, concs £2.50.

HULL
David Mach
New installation made from newspapers.
Ferens Art Gallery, Queen Victoria Square (01482 610610). Today, 10am-5pm; tomorrow, 1.30-4.30pm; free.

MIDDLESBROUGH
Marina Abramovic
New site-specific work from the acclaimed artist.
Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Linthorpe Road (01642 247445). Today, 10am-6pm; free.

OXFORD
Ruskin and Oxford
Appraisal of the artist and art critic's work.
Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street (01865 278000). Today, 10am-4pm; tomorrow, 2-4pm; free.

COMING SOON

LONDON
From Oct 16
In the Company of Men
The RSC launches its London season in the Barbican Pit with the British premiere of Edward Bond's contemporary drama. Box office: 0171-638 8891.

Dec 17-Jan 4
The Kirov Ballet
The company presents *The Nutcracker* for a season at the London Coliseum. Box office: 0171-632 8300.

Jan 9-30
Snowshow
The Russian clown Slava Polunin brings his Edinburgh Fringe hit to London's Peacock Theatre (formerly the Royal). Prior to London it will tour to Dublin, High Wycombe, Halifax, Barnstaple, Oxford, Liverpool, Belfast, Cardiff and Crawley. London box office: 0171-314 8800.

REGIONAL
BIRMINGHAM
Oct 8-9
Les Danaides
Silvii Purcarete's epic production of Aeschylus's tragedy plays two performances only at the National Indoor Arena. Box office: 0121-236 4455.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
From Nov 21
Much Ado About Nothing
The RSC launches its Stratford season with a new production, starring Alex Jennings as Benedick, Siobhan Redmond as Beatrice. Box office: 01789 295623.



On tour: Slava Polunin, the clown, will present *Snowshow*

TOURING
Oct 12-19
David Murray USA/UK Big Band
The tenor saxophonist tours to Liverpool (Bluecoat Arts Centre, Oct 12-13, 0151-709 5297), London (Queen Elizabeth Hall, Oct 14, 0171-960 4242), Brighton (Sallis Benney Theatre, Oct 15, 01273 709709), Exeter (St George's Hall, Oct 16, 01392 42111), Manchester (Nia Centre, Oct 17, 0161-227 4254), Southampton (Turner Sims Hall, 01703 595151) and Birmingham (Adrian Boulton Hall, 0121-236 5622).

FAIRS

LONDON
Belly Dancing
Masterclass
Maria Louisa from Carlton TV flexes her muscles in the classroom.
Albany Theatre, Douglas Way, SE8 (0181-692 4446). Today, 3.15-5.45pm; £8, concs £5 (per class).

Heritage Antiques Fair
Jewellery, prints, paintings, ceramics and more on display.
London Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, W1 (0171-493 8000). Tomorrow, 11am-5pm; £1, child free.

Horse of the Year Show
Horse play featuring the Cadre Noir of Saumur.
Wembley Arena, Empire Way, HA9 (0181-900 1234). Today, tomorrow; phone for details.

REGIONAL
BEACONSFIELD
50th Woodburn Arts Festival
Concerts, exhibitions, theatre and children's events.
Woodburn Arts Festival Information, Various venues (01628 524243). Today, tomorrow; phone for details.

GUILDFORD
29th Surrey Antiques Fair
Antiques and collectables.
Civic Hall, (01483 422562). Today, ends tomorrow, 11am-7pm; £3-£4.

LIVERPOOL
Visionfest
Annual visual arts and design fair.

Merseyside Tourism and Conference Centre, Atlantic Pavilion (0151-709 2444). Today, tomorrow; phone for details.

MANCHESTER
Manchester Festival
Comedy, music, club culture and digital art.
Manchester Festival Information, Various venues (0161-236 7592). Today, ends tomorrow; phone for details.

NORTHAMPTON
Doll Fair
Doll mania with toys and miniatures for sale.
Leamington Hall, (01604 686272). Tomorrow, 10.30am-4.30pm; £2.50, concs £1.20, child free.



London: Cadre Noir at the Horse of the Year Show

STROUD
50th Stroud and District Arts Festival
A wealth of arts activities covering theatre and music.
Stroud and District Arts Festival Information, Various venues (01453 765768).

Today, tomorrow, times vary; phone for details.

SULGRAVE
Melford Hys Company
Tudor travelling players.
Sulgrave Manor, Manor Road (01295 760205). Today, ends tomorrow, 10.30am-5pm; £4, child £2, family £11.

SWANSEA
Swansea Celtic Festival
Traditional crafts, folk and sports events.
Various venues, (01792 636960). From tomorrow; phone for details.

WINDSOR
Windsor Festival
The music fest ends today.
Windsor Festival Information, Various venues (01753 623400). Times vary; phone for details.

FILM

Films in London and (where indicated with the symbol ♦) on release across the country

NEW RELEASES

♦ COURAGE UNDER FIRE (15)
Denzel Washington searches for truth in the Gulf War. Half-way intelligent drama, with Meg Ryan.
Odeons: Kensington (01426 914666) *Swiss Cottage* (01426 914098) *Ritz* (0171-737 2121) *UCI Whiteleys* (0990 888990) *Virgin Fulham Road* (0171-370 2636)

LETTERS FROM THE EAST
Inert drama about an Estonian-born woman

searching for her mother.
Director, Andrew Grieve.
NFT (0171-928 3232) ♦

♦ THE NUTTY PROFESSOR (12)
Lively if vulgar reworking of the old Jerry Lewis film, with Eddie Murphy as the misfit professor. Director, Tom Shadyac.
Clapham Picture House (0171-498 3323) *Empire* (0990 888 990) *MGM Baker Street* (0171-935 9772) *Ritz* (0171-737 2121) *UCI Whiteleys* (0990 888990) *Virgin Fulham Road* (0171-370 2636) *Trocadero* (0171-434 0031)

TOUCH OF EVIL (12)
Revival of Orson Welles's flamboyant thriller from 1958 about murky happenings on the Mexican border. With Charlton Heston, Welles himself, Janet Leigh and Marlene Dietrich.
Lumiere (0171-836 0691)

CRITIC'S CHOICE

JUDE (15)
Neither Hardy's novel nor the film's director, Michael Winterbottom, are cut out for making pretty pictures, and this is a tale about dashed hopes and illicit love. But visually much is remarkable. Christopher Eccleston acts in earnest, and Kate Winslet gives a mesmerising performance as Sue, the stonecutter's vivacious cousin, turned war by the kicks of fate.
Geoff Brown
ABC Tottenham Court Road (0171-436 6148) *Barbican Cinema* (0171-638 8891) *Gate Notting Hill* (0171-727 4043) *Odeon Haymarket* (01426-915 353) *Odeon Kensington* (01426-914 666) *Odeon Swiss Cottage* (0171-586 3057)



New release: Christopher Eccleston stars in *Jude*

Screen on Baker Street (0171-935 2772) **Screen on the Green** (0171-226 3520) *UCI Whiteleys* (0171-792 3332) *Virgin Chelsea* (0171-352 5096) **Warner West End** (0171-437 4343)

CURRENT

BLOOD SIMPLE (18)
Welcome revival of the Coen brothers' debut feature, made in 1983: a film noir homage made with cold-blooded verve. With John Getz and Francis McDormand.
MGM Piccadilly (0171-437 3561) *Watermans* (0181-568 1176)

FARGO (18)
A kidnapping goes haywire in the Midwest. Wonderful, humane crime thriller from Joel and Ethan Coen, with Frances McDormand and William H. Macy.
ABC Pantons Street (0171-930 0631) *Plaza* (0990 888990)

♦ JANE EYRE (PG)
Decent but bloodless adaptation of the novel, with Charlotte Gainsbourg and William Hurt. Director, Franco Zeffirelli.
Barbican (0171-638 8891) *Notting Hill Corner* (0171-727 6705) *Richmond* (0181-332 0030) *Ritz* (0171-737 2121) *Screen/Hill* (0171-435 3366) *Virgin Fulham Road* (0171-370 2636) *Haymarket* (0171-839 1527) *Warner West End* (0171-437 4343)

♦ STEALING BEAUTY (15)
Enjoyable Bertolucci about an American teenager's sexual flowering in Tuscany. With Liv Ullmann.
ABC Shaftesbury Avenue (0171-836 6279) *Metro* (0171-437 0757) *Odeon Kensington* (01426 914666) *Virgin Chelsea* (0171-352 5096)

THEATRE

LONDON
Laughter on the 23rd
Neil Simon's very funny account of working among a team of scriptwriters for comedian Sid Caesar back in the 1950s. Fighting against time and philistine producers. Gene Wilder plays Sid. Directed by Roger Haines, responsible for last year's Manchester production.
Queen's, Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0171-494 5040). Tonight, 8pm; mat, 4pm.

Uncle Vanya
Bill Bryden's starry

Chichester cast: Frances Barber, Constance Cummings, Trevor Eve, Derek Jacobi, Peggy Mount, Imogen Stubbs, and Richard Johnson in place of Alec McCowen.
Albery, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-369 1730). Tonight, 7.30pm; mat, 3pm.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

WHEN WE ARE MARRIED
J. B. Priestley often attacked arrogance and complacency — viz. *An Inspector Calls* — but never so humorously or robustly as in his tale of the three respectable couples who belatedly find out they were never properly hitched. The pick of the performances comes from Dawn French, whose bullying wife remains magnificently menacing, whether she is prowling the

stage like a killer-rhino or advancing on her husband like a blend of Texas gun-slinger and sumo wrestler; but keep an eye out for portly Leo McKern as the photographer. You will not see the solemnity of the exceedingly drunk better played.
BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE
Savoy, Strand, WC2 (0171-836 8888). Tonight, 7.30pm; mat, 3pm.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
Diana Rigg and David Suchet star Albee's most famous play.
Almeida, Almeida Street, N1 (0171-359 4404). Tonight, 7.30pm; mat, 3pm.

REGIONAL
CHELTEMHAM
Animal Farm

Northern Stage brings George Orwell's farmyard fable vividly to life in a bold physical theatre piece. Frank McConnell's muscular choreography is complemented by a thumping, terrifying soundtrack. Alan Lyddard directs Ian Woodbridge's adaptation. Unsuitable for ages 12 and under.
Everyman, Regent Street (01242 572573). Tonight, 8pm.

SHEFFIELD
Hay Fever
Jane How, Maria Charles, Peter McNery head Deborah Paige's production of Coward's evergreen comedy on how to drive house guests off the premises.
Crucible, Norfolk Street (0114-276 9922). Tonight, 7.30pm.

DON'T MISS

■ The Warley National Model Railway Exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham: something for everyone. See Children
■ A rare chance to hear the great American soprano, Jessye Norman perform in Britain. See Classical
■ Dawn French and Leo McKern in J B Priestley's *When We Are Married*. See Theatre

YOUR GUIDE TO THE BEST FRENCH SKI RESORTS
Pages 20,21

Ruth Gledhill attends a consecration of new bishops at St Paul's Cathedral

Discreet and spiritual persons



AT occasions of pomp and circumstance in the Church of England, the gents outshine the ladies every time, and this service was no exception. With entire chapels, vestries and aisles set aside for a spectacular panoply of bishops and archbishops from as far afield as Uganda and Utrecht to "robe", we were given an impressive display of red, white and gold ecclesiastical finery from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, downwards. The congregation, which included the King of Uganda as well as other dignitaries from around the world, was there to witness the consecration of three bishops for the London diocese, men chosen as "honest and discreet spiritual persons".

Thousands turned out to see these "rusty and well beloved" new bishops given the sees of Stepney, Kensington and Fulham on the feast day of Lancelot Andrews, 17th-century Bishop of Winchester. Andrews, one of the translators of the Authorised Version of the Bible, was also a defender of the Oath of Allegiance, imposed after the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. Each of the new bishops swore this oath to the Queen in St Dunstan's Chapel before the service, and also took the "Oath of due obedience" to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In recent years the Church of England has been criticised for many things, one chief complaint being that its bishops are bland, boring and, worst of all, liberal in their beliefs. None of these charges could be levelled at the latest crop. Dr John Sentamu, a former High Court judge in Uganda, former vicar of Tulse Hill and now Bishop of Stepney, is arguably the most distinguished. A man of formidable intellect and talent, his south London church has achieved international recognition for its music and vitality. During the service we even sang a psalm, number 119, to music he had composed. Bishop number two, the Right Rev Michael Colclough, formerly an archdeacon at London House, the diocesan headquarters, is the most mysterious.

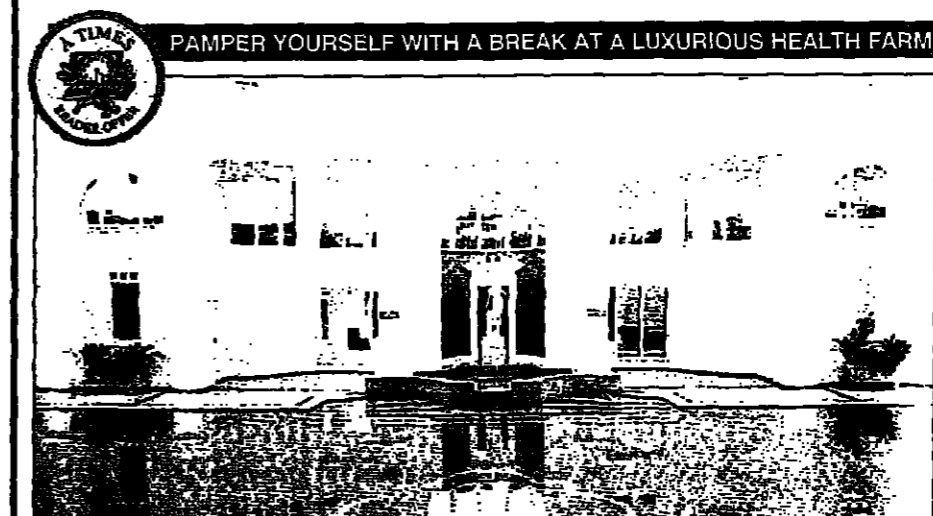
AT YOUR SERVICE

★ **A five-star guide** ★
BISHOP OF LONDON: The Right Rev Richard Chartres
ARCHITECTURE: Discovery of Inigo Jones' portico beneath West Front of Wren's masterpiece announced outside during service. ★★★★★
SERMON: Bishop Chartres warned that Anglicans must not disappear "into the comfortable invisibility of some privatised, individualistic salvation cult". ★★★
LITURGY: An effective combination of ancient and modern in the language of the 1662 prayer book. ★★★★★
MUSIC: Hymns and songs in Latin and English. Fantastic choir. ★★★★★
SPIRITUAL HIGH: Elevating. ★★★
AFTER-SERVICE CARE: Café in the refurbished crypt. ★★

An urbane character, he commands respect. But religious affairs correspondents have the highest hopes of number three, the Right Rev John Broadhurst, former Rector of Wood Green, in north London, and also chairman of the traditionalist umbrella group, Forward in Faith, which led the opposition to women priests. Days before his consecration to the see of Fulham, Bishop Broadhurst called for the Pope to be acknowledged as head of the Church, above both Queen and archbishop. "All the dreams I had for the Church of England have gone, and it is quite terrible", was one of his many delightfully quotable remarks after the General Synod voted to ordain women in 1992.

Few there could forget the recent death of the Dean of St Paul's, Dr Eric Evans, who was due to retire soon and whose absence was a strange form of presence. The archbishop remembered him in his prayers, and prayed also that "each one of us will be encouraged to serve God in the power of the Holy Spirit". The archbishop asked us if it was our will that the bishops be ordained. Most said "yes". A lone voice cried out "no", a protest against the direction the church is taking in the wake of women's ordination. Dr Carey, perhaps unsettled, stammered slightly: "Will you... will you uphold them in their ministry?" More loudly this time, we cried, "We will," and this time there was no protest.

St Paul's Cathedral, St Paul's Churchyard, EC4 (0171-236 4128).



Get into shape

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Cruising: The luxury way to see the newly emerging Saigon and the older pleasures of Bangkok and Singapore

Back to Vietnam - with style



Inside the ancient Thien Hau Taoist temple in Saigon

The New York lady rich enough to live in the same building as Henry Kissinger brandished an exquisitely carved marble statuette of a Vietnamese peasant carrying two pailers. "The man wanted three dollars but I got it for two. You can't go wrong with two dollars can you?" she asked. "Or can you?"

We were in the historic town of Hoi An, halfway along Vietnam's eastern coast, and if the American eye for a bargain is undimmed, the Vietnamese desire to embrace the market economy is feverish. Vietnam may be a socialist republic, but it offers the exhilarating spectacle of 70 million people pulling themselves up by their sandal straps.

We were passengers aboard *Crystal Symphony* on the "Mystic Passage" leg (Hong Kong, Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore) part of her inaugural world cruise. Launched in April last year, she is claimed to be one of the world's top four cruise ships.

Many of the passengers calling at Danang, where the first troops landed in the Vietnam war, were American, though most of them were too old to have served.

Here, the Vietnamese peasants we saw would have to work for two months to earn the \$35 price of the bottle of 1991 Savigny les Beaune Louis Jadot which we had drunk at dinner the night before. But we received a rousing welcome, starting with a dawn cacophony of traditional Vietnamese music.

The people of Hoi An greeted us with pots of tea in the early 19th-century wooden shop houses, which are among the 843 historic buildings being gradually and sympathetically restored.

Nearby China Beach, with its miles of white sand and huge surf, is beautiful and as yet unspoiled. Now is the time to see it before work starts on a complex of resort hotels.

We had boarded *Crystal Symphony* at Hong Kong on one of its coldest days in living memory, with the temperature dropping to 3C. The ship's staterooms proved a restful blend of bleached wood and cream walls. More than half

FACT FILE

■ The next 14-night cruise on *Crystal Harmony* taking in Vietnam is from Bangkok to Hong Kong and costs from £3,055 per person. British passengers leave by air on October 27.

■ Visas are needed for Vietnam and are available on board for US\$35 (about £24).

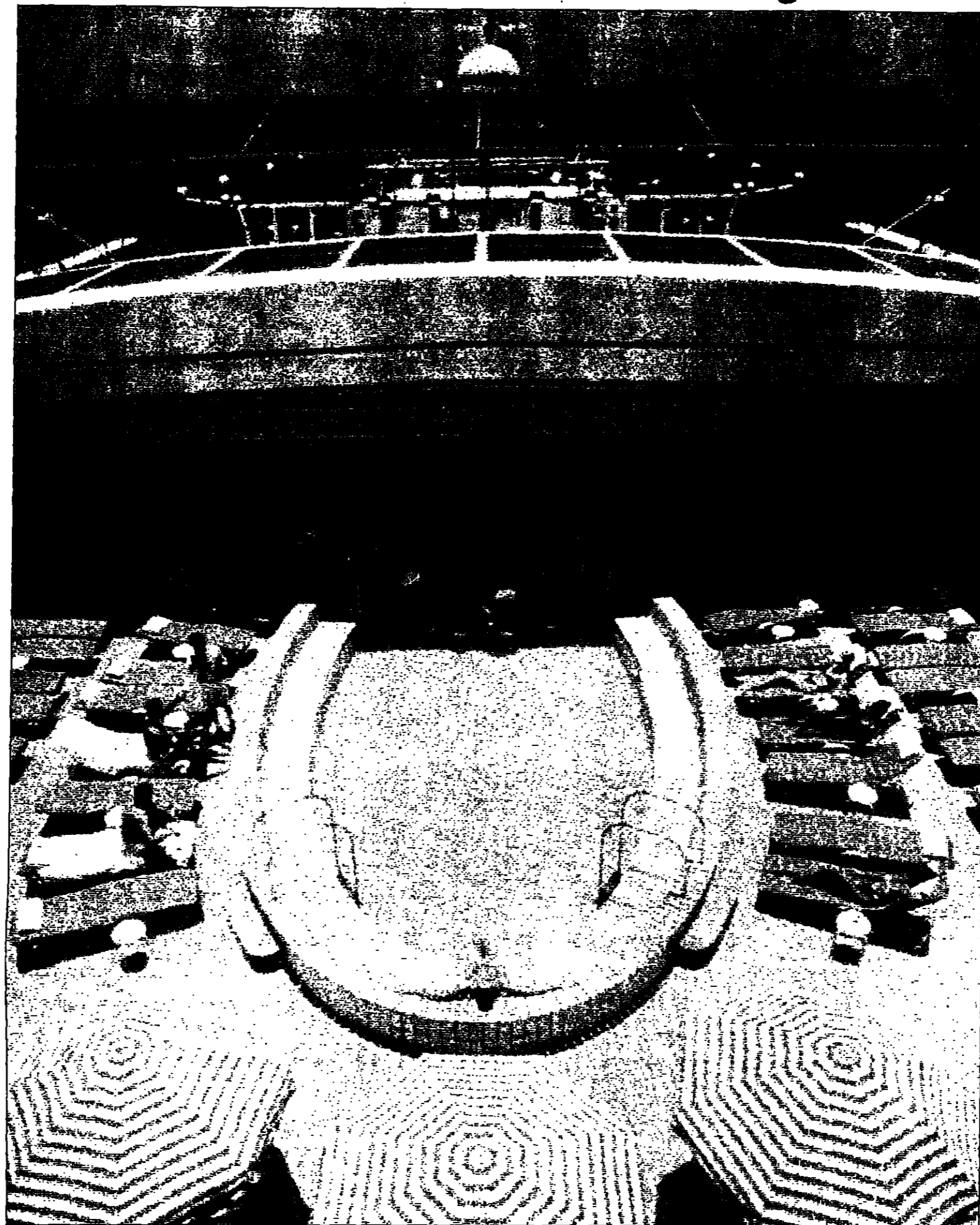
■ The next world cruise on *Crystal Symphony* departs from Los Angeles on January 17 for 103 days, with fly/cruise sections available from Britain. For example, you can join the ship in Bombay, leaving Britain on March 12, and cruise to Cape Town ("Golden Coast of Africa" sector) on a 27-night cruise from £7,395 per person.

■ For a brochure, contact Crystal Cruises, 11 Quadrant Arcade, Regent Street, London W1R 6JG (0171-287 9040).

have verandas. The bathrooms are compact, but finished in tile and marble. There is a Persian carpet on the floor of the men's lavatory.

The focal point of the ship is a brilliantly lit staircase which makes through an atrium to the Crystal Plaza, past a spectacular glass optical illusion of a waterfall. There is a glass piano. On gala nights the whole area sparkles with hundreds of points of light, as the beautifully dressed women wear the diamonds and emeralds, which they rarely dare to take out of the bank vault at home, and diamond studs gleam from the men's dress shirts.

Cesar's Palace, the huge casino operated by the Las Vegas promoters, introduces an endearing note of kitsch, with busts of the emperors gravely staring above the twinkling fruit machines. Throughout the ship, the



Aboard the *Crystal Symphony*, most staterooms have a veranda, a Persian carpet graces the floor of the gent's and wine can cost two month's wages

emphasis is on unashamed sybaricity. The five courses on the European-based dinner menu would typically include caviar or oysters, Dover sole, beef wellington or lobster thermidor, and a huge variety of soups, salads and puddings. You could also eat Chinese or Italian in the intimate Jade or Prego restaurants.

For every one of the 960 passengers there were two crew. Guests could attend a lecture on health and beauty by Beverly Sassoon or a cookery demonstration by the exuberant Wolfgang Puck, creator of the Spago restaurant on Sunset Boulevard, helped by "sous chef" Arne Johnson, a star of the *Rowan and Martin Laugh-in*. Or you could shop for a linked 18-carat gold chain for the pooch you left behind.

Ho Chi Minh City, or Saigon as it is still widely called, is dominated by the

moped. Whole streets are devoted to shops selling mudguards, horns, bells and handlebars. Tourists are not pestered. I declined a cyclo-cab ride but the driver insisted on placing his vehicle in front of the madcap mopeds to allow me to cross the road.

American passengers photographed each other in front of the American Embassy in Le Duan Boulevard, which still bears the stained concrete shield from which the last troops were airlifted after the 1975 Tet offensive. The city's most popular attraction, the War Crimes Museum, was deemed too gruesome to be included in our tour.

When we sailed into Bangkok, the public buildings were draped in black and white, with beautifully worked robes, to commemorate the death of the popular Princess Mother. A huge pagoda-shaped funeral pyre had been erected opposite the royal palace and women in traditional black and white mourning clothes arrived to pay their respects.

The spread of modern Thai-

land continues furiously. A coach tour of the countryside with less walking "took more than an hour before it left the built-up areas. The beach resort of Pattaya was, as our guide warned us, "very busy, very dirty, very naughty. Lots of hanky-panky massage. Not real Thai massage".

Many fear that Vietnam's virginal China Beach near Hoi An will emulate Pattaya with its "porn" hotels and "boy" bars and polluted sea.

As we sailed into Singapore, our destination, the tour manager warned against expecting bargains. A Tiger beer in the Long Bar of the over-restored Raffles Hotel costs ten Singapore dollars (nearly £5), an indifferent coffee at a ferry terminal three dollars.

I left the cruise hoping that Vietnam will soon join the financial tigers of the Pacific Rim without following all their examples or compromising her unique charm.

JOHN GRIGSBY

● The author was the guest of Crystal Cruises.

THEMED CRUISES

■ Cunard (01703 63166) is offering musical theatre, jazz and colour cruises aboard the QE2 in 1997. The composer Marvin Hamlisch and the actors Paul Robeson and Norman Desmond, are just a few of the stars in the 1997 programme which features over 50 ports of call.

■ Dolphin cruises (0121 445 1010) are offering live music for 1997 with a seven-night cruise on the *SeaBreeze* and *IslandBreeze*. Passengers to the Caribbean aboard the *SeaBreeze* in April can enjoy Country and Western and in September the sound of Motown. In September *IslandBreeze* will feature rock'n'roll and later in the month, Latin American music. Cruises cost from £120 per person for a two night cruise from New York or £895 for a nine-night Caribbean fly-cruise.

■ Holland America (0171-729 1929) is offering a Film Festival at Sea, an 11-day transatlantic cruise departing on 11 April and featuring lectures by film critics, classic film screenings and celebrity interviews. Prices start at £1,103 (including a 50 per cent early booking discount). On 25 October, Big Band Spectacular, an 11-day transatlantic cruise will feature the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. Prices start from £1,155 per person.

■ Majesty Cruise Line (0121-445 1010) is offering golf, American sport, country and western, jazz and blues, cultural festivals and even a psychic cruise on cruises aboard *Royal Majesty* in 1997. Cultural cruise celebrations include Irish and Italian Festivals and an Octoberfest. Prices start from £319 per person.

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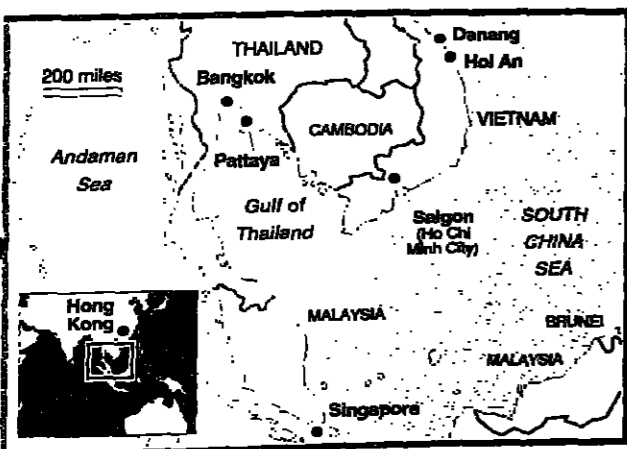


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International skiing: In a new series, starting with France, our expert Doug Sager gives a round-up....

Resorts get their skis on for winter

THE MESSAGE from tour operators is: "Do not wait for late-booking offers this winter." With brochures launched earlier than ever, tour operators say they are confident of selling 90 per cent of their holidays at full brochure prices.

After a disastrous snow year in 1995-96 across most of the Alps — Italy and southern France being the exceptions — skiing seems on the upswing, fuelled by burgeoning enthusiasm for snowboarding and by the new "miracle" carving skis, which promise to make every beginner an overnight expert.

Skiing holidays are currency driven, which explains the huge popularity of Italy and Canada over the past two seasons. Both countries are again in great demand, the best accommodation in Italy already fully booked in some cases. But

this autumn, at the time many holidays are chosen, sterling has improved or held steady compared to each of the skiing currencies except the Italian lira, which has fallen about 6 per cent. And all 15 of Italy's top resorts have this winter raised their ski pass prices.

Bookings to Austria show few signs of growth, despite improvement in the exchange rate. But Switzerland, especially in Verbier and Zermatt, is making a comeback, now that sterling has climbed about 8 per cent against the Swiss franc, and only two out of the top 15 Swiss resorts have raised ski pass prices.

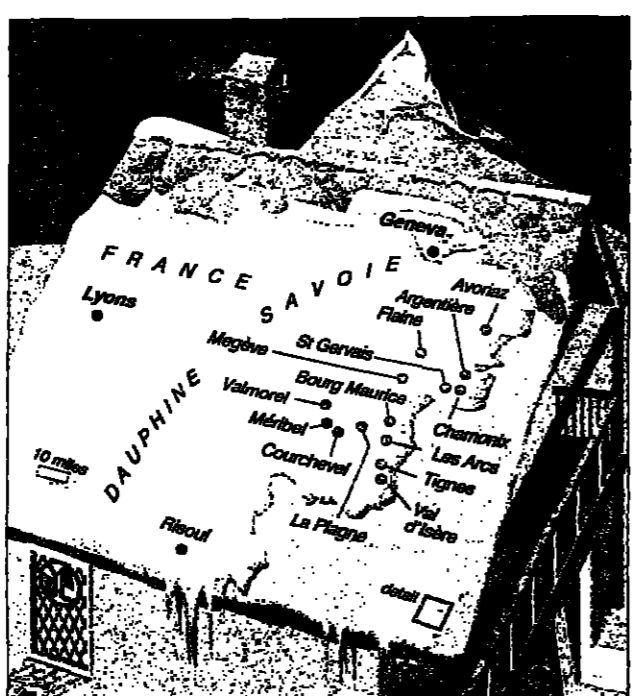
Travel agents report a growing trend, too, towards America. Skiers who have tried Canada find resorts in California and Colorado offer more scope for skiing, better nightlife and warmer weather.

The French ski the way they buy wine, by *parcels*. It's unheard of to find a Frenchman skiing in Austria, for example. And French skiers remain as aloof to the lure of North American skiing — the hottest growth area for British skiers — as they do to the delights of British *bifteck*.

Even within France the French ski by *département*. Parisians slot into Courchevel *arrondissement* by *arrondissement*. Last winter it was the most southerly resorts — particularly Isola 2000, within a snowball's toss of the Mediterranean, which had some of the best snow in the Alps. But few French skiers living north of Grenoble were moved to explore south of Les Deux Alpes.

British skiers are, by comparison, adventurers. There is no French resort, from the Pyrenees to the Jura, where British accents are unheard. Discounting the drinking resorts — Sol in Austria and Sauze d'Oulx in Italy — the snowfields of France continue to dominate the top of the popularity charts with every class of skier.

With the advent of Le Shuttle and cut-price ferry crossings, even budget travellers can now do better in France than in Eastern Europe, especially if one considers quality of snow and savings on unlimited quantities of duty-free goods. Indeed, last winter a number of coaches from Poland and the Czech Republic appeared in Risoul and Valmorel.



Megève's sunny skiing in forested glades, complemented by an attractive, cobbled town centre and horse-drawn sleighs, are at a price to a clientele older and less obviously *nouveau riche* than found in Courchevel

Nobody actually counts independent travellers, and estimates range from 25 to 50 per cent of the overall ceiling of about 700,000 winter holiday-makers. But in every tour operator's top ten, French resorts vastly outnumber those from any other nation.

There are indications, however, this mass popularity may not endure forever. Britons have become habituated to France, through summer holidays and second homes. We are horrified by Swiss prices and still hesitant to cross the Atlantic for six days' skiing.

But aside from familiarity, French skiing faces an uphill battle in the medium-term future.

French resorts are not the easiest to access. From Geneva or Zurich airports, with their railway stations built into the air terminals, many Swiss resorts are far quicker and more convenient to get to than the Tarentaise. Austrian pensions offer more commodious accommodation than French flats — the pokiest per square metre in the Alps — and any Austrian village is cosier than a French concrete complex.

Courchevel is unquestionably more expensive than Verbier or St Anton and arguably dearer than Aspen or Zermatt. Italy's ski lifts and snowmaking are more up to date overall than the French standard. Even the Swiss can be more welcoming than the French, with their patented sniffs, sneers and "Je m'en fou" shrugs, and the entire country is virtually a no-go area for adult skiers during February, when prices skyrocket and province after province of French schoolchildren are let loose on the pistes.

If there is one unarguable appeal of French skiing it is the intermediate interlinked skipass regions, skiing paradises for recreational connoisseurs of the immaculately groomed piste. Never mind that Italy's Dolomiti Superski and Austria's Top Tauern are hundreds of kilometres bigger than the Trois Vallées in France. Regardless of price or ultimate expanse of skiing terrain, the Trois Vallées and the Espace Killy are home to the greatest number of British chalet operators in the Alps. And Val d'Isère and Courchevel continue unrivalled in British tastings as the *grand* ski resorts of the Alps.

ing the most cultured, old-money cachet (in Megève).

Chamonix's status as a good-size working town as well as world-class resort allows the widest choice of affordable chalets, self-catering flats and student *dortoirs*. The world headquarters of ski mountaineering, Chamonix imbues the rankst beginner with a sense of ski cred. The museum is redolent of rotting ropes and photos from the days when mountain guides were no more than human mules hauling ladies in voluminous dresses and sedan chairs across crevasses.

What Chamonix is not is pretty, cute or cosy. Lift stations for the outlying, easy-skiing sectors of Flégère, Tour and Houches require personal transport, or more patience than can reasonably be expected if the bus system, which shuts down at 7pm, is tried. Many tour operators consequently include a van, and even mountain guide, as a package option.

Argentière's Grands Mont-

ets cable cars raise skiing possibilities from legendary off-piste, runs such as the Pas de Chèvre for which a guide is essential, to good, steep red and black pistes in a scenic wonderland of crevasses. The village is compact and congenial — off the main street, which must be one of the ugliest in the Alps.

Megève's cobbled centre and horse-drawn sleighs are complemented by sunny skiing in forested glades, attractive at a price to a clientele older and less obviously *nouveau riche* than that found in Courchevel.

St Gervais has the faded glamour of an old spa and the quaintness of a cog railway line to Chamonix via Les Houches, making for a relatively inexpensive and less intense alternative to Argentière or Chamonix.

TROIS VALLÉES ESPACE KILLY

Courchevel, Méribel, Val d'Isère, Tignes. Inaccurately claiming to be the world's biggest skiing domain, the area ranks fifth after Italy's Dolomiti Superski, Austria's Top Tauern and the Portes du Soleil and Mont Blanc regions of France; the Trois Vallées certainly is the best connected. The Espace Killy, shared by Tignes and Val d'Isère, doesn't come close to making the top ten of the largest skipass regions in the Alps, but makes up in variety of terrain for any limits in expanse. Both skiing networks

are remarkably efficient and free of queues.

All through the night Courchevel's snow-grooming machines growl and about 550 snow cannons spurt out the white stuff to make the rolling, wide and well-marked pistes which are the envy of the Alps. Courchevel flatters beginners, and fatigues intermediates with both the ease and the expanse of its skiing. No French resort has more characterful chalets, or more luxurious hotels. Despite the high level of accommodation, at commensurate prices, and a glut of good restaurants, the village architecture inspires little admiration or affection. An advantage in Courchevel, however, is that many chalets are close to the slopes, and the streets are more filled with snow than traffic. The quintessential French resort, Courchevel admits that almost 30 per cent of its clientele is British.

Méribel, founded by a Briton, is the most central resort for skiing the Trois Vallées, and has the most chalets, as well as possibly the most British skiers per square metre of piste in the Alps. It is, unfortunately, not so inexpensive as it once was, but is still a refuge from chic-shock in Courchevel. Méribel Motard, a purpose built apartment block satellite, has better snow and lower prices than Méribel village itself, which though lively enough lacks any pretence at alpine charm and

Continued on next page

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TRAVEL

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...on what the leading ski countries have to offer in the way of amenities, ambience and accommodation



The huge range of skiing around La Plagne is matched by competitive pricing in what seems to be a surplus of self-catering accommodation. Good skiers can have a good holiday, with the emphasis on skiing

Continued from page 20

Val d'Isère is the resort of choice for the bulk of Britain's best skiers, though for serious off-piste it has to rank behind Chamonix and Verbier, and cult resorts such as La Grave and Alagna.

What expert skiers get in services from independent operators, such as the Zimmer brothers' Top Ski, a byword among British off-piste enthusiasts, and plenty of untracked terrain, even if it does lack the couloirs and crevasses.

The pistes of Tignes and Val d'Isère are nothing like so well groomed as those of the Trois Vallées, and intermediates face some nasty passages in places. But well-advised beginners will not be intimidated either.

Tignes is considerably less attractive a village than Val d'Isère, which itself suffers from neon and metal fatigue

all along the straggling main street. But Tignes is priced accordingly. Val d'Isère is not, though newer hamlet-style developments in rough local stone are both charming and well appointed inside.

PURPOSE-BUILT RESORTS

La Plagne, Les Arcs, Flaine The French invented the concept of concrete in snow tower blocks at altitude in areas where no previous villages existed. These remain masterpieces of skiing convenience and price consciousness, at the cost of genuine village ambience.

Critics of the blocks say they are ugly and unnatural. Covering the concrete with wood helps. But the experience of living inside is inescapably analogous to life, or at least a week, in prison.

Popular with school groups, these resorts suffer queues and chaos during the French school holidays in February. Les Arcs is typical of the purpose-built concept, with complexes at various altitudes, but, thanks to a quick ten-minute funicular connection, Arcs offers the unusual option of staying down in reasonably priced Bourg St Maurice, which doesn't seem to have a clue there's a major resort overhead.

The skiing features a vertical descent of about 2000m and is good enough for people to have been killed there, though in general skiing is wide open and uncrowded.

rather than threatening. In each sector at least one ski lift is free, meaning beginners or occasional skiers need never buy a skipass.

La Plagne spreads the architectural blot around 11 residential "stations", the lower complexes tending to be more nearly attractive.

The huge range of skiing is matched by very competitive pricing in what seems to be a surplus of self-catering accommodation. As in Les Arcs, good skiers can have a good skiing holiday, with the emphasis on skiing.

Children have been known to burst into tears at the first sight of Flaine's excrement architecture, but parents rejoice at the short transfer, the car-free central area so easy for shopping and the utter absence of hotshot, child-threatening expert skiers.

The Grand Massif ski-pass

area is only 40 kilometres smaller than the Espace Killy, and friendlier to beginners and early intermediates, who will find ample scope for cruising.

FOR FAMILY VALUES

Risoul, Valmorel, Avoriaz Finding a resort suitable for mixed abilities is difficult enough, without mixing the ages and, more often than not, trying to prove that three or four can ski as cheaply as two.

Risoul not only caters for children, but also for grandparents, who seem to find the large ski domain shared with Var easy and uncrowded. Indeed, some pistes have been graded to look more difficult than they are. An effort at French animation is made — fireworks displays and

nighttime snowboard jumping events. But most families retire early to their self-catered flats, missing the floor show. "Jane and her Serpents" at the Safari Club.

Valmorel's nursery slopes are blocked off from passing skiers, who have a wide range of intermediate skiing to choose from in the ski-pass region. The Saperlipopette kindergarten is so popular that reservations are made a year in advance.

An effort to harmonise by nature by using stone and wood and by building small hamlets instead of massive tower blocks is largely successful, though ultimately this is a self-catering, price-conscious resort, and, significantly, was booked to the rafters all last season.

Avoriaz is the hub of Europe's fourth largest skispass region, the Portes du Soleil, part of 13 villages straddling the Swiss-French border. Here, every effort is made to animate the lower blocks of Avoriaz, and with great success among young snowboarders especially. If it were another 1,000m higher, the Portes would eclipse the Trois Vallées in renown.

For the moment they are undervalued, both in price and popularity. And the vast scope of cross-frontier skiing, enlivened by indifferent signposting, makes for a ski safari-style adventure on groomed pistes which the whole family can share.

● NEXT WEEK: America

CALLING HOME

THIS winter, France is dropping its 19 prefix for international calls made from inside the country in favour of the worldwide standard 00 code.

Travellers trying to reach French resorts and flat-letting agencies from Britain should note that additional numbers have been prefixed to each regional dialling code. For all skiing areas in the south-western sector, including the main resorts covered by tour operators, this prefix is 4.

LEADING OPERATORS

■ THE biggest choice of French resorts (22) is offered by Crystal (0181-399 5144). First Choice (0161-745 7000) has 19. Thomson (0990 329329) and Inghams (0181-780 4444) both 18. Neilson (0113 239 4555) has 16 and Airtours (01706 260000) 12.

■ A HOST of specialists, some dealing with only one resort, some focussing on off-piste or weekends, has evolved in France.

Club Med (0171-581 1161) offers the French way to ski France and features truly all-inclusive pricing — lift passes, tuition, full board, child-minding and insurance at nine French resorts.

The Ski Company (0171-730-9600). Après ski champagne, certified guides and elegant accommodation, puts the company on the top rung of the luxury ladder in Val d'Isère, Chamonix, Méribel and the Portes du Soleil.

Ski Expert (01252 616789), which wrote the book on holidays with children, now offers no-smoking chalets in Chamonix, Morzine, La Plagne and Courchevel, and a money-back guarantee on childcare services.

Ski Peak (01252 794941). This small firm, operating only in Vaujany on the outskirts of Alpe d'Huez, has excellent child-minding facilities.

Collineige (01276 24262) has the best year-round chalets and old farmhouses in Chamonix and Argentière. It is also the British agent for mountain guides in Chamonix.

Fleriski (0171-352 0044), the specialists in corporate entertainment, weekend and flexible breaks in Courchevel, now has its own hotel there, as well as luxurious accommodation.

Meriski (01451 847888), the Méribel-only chalet specialists, is adding corporate entertainment and three of the resort's best hotels to its list.

Motours (01892 518555), with drive-yourself self-catering, makes skiing affordable at 23 resorts.

Ski Weekend (01367 241636). In addition to its hotel programme for weekend skiers in Chamonix, attracting skiers of all levels, the company organises expeditions to the cult resort of La Grave and couloir descents on Mont Blanc.

YSE (0181-871 5117). Exclusive to Val d'Isère and claiming more and better chalets than other operators, the company's service and Sunday-only departures guarantee a regular 75 per cent return rate.

WORD-WATCHING

Answers from page 27

BARKING DEER

(c) The Indian muntjac, *Cervulus muntjac*, found in India, Burma and Tibet. So named from its call. A. Keith, *Land Below Wind*, 1939: "There is no meat as sweet as barking deer."

GONION

(a) The outermost point on the angle of the lower jaw on each side. From the Greek *gonia* an angle. "Don't put your sonions at me in that minatory way. Head Master." *Pure Bluff*. We both know that you have been caught red-handed in a shameful piece of staff room duplicity."

ALKAPTON

(c) A reducing substance which causes urine, left standing, to turn dark through oxidation. A composite word formed from al(kali) + kápton, neuter present participle of káptein, the Greek for to swallow greedily. "Alcaptonuria: a certain kind of human urine darkens on the addition of alkalis. Bäderker isolated from such urine a substance to which he gave the name alkapton."

DIETL'S CRISIS

(a) A violent stomach ache caused by renal colic. The medical eponym of Joseph Dietl (1804-1878) of Cracow. "The symptoms — sudden great abdominal pain, vomiting, distension of the belly, tenderness, and signs of collapse — were strongly suggestive of Dietl's crises."

FREE SKIING FOR THE CHILDREN

■ Bursting at the seams during the peak February weeks, French resorts, like all others in the Alps, suffer from lack of custom during the January "hole". This season, the French Government Tourist Office has announced a special promotion for 28 French resorts, among them Chamonix, Courchevel and Val d'Isère, offering a week's free accommodation, free equipment hire and free ski school instruction for children under 12.

■ The promotion is valid for the three holiday weeks starting Saturdays on January 4, 11 and 18. For the fine print: the offer is limited to two children per family and is subject to two accompanying adults paying full price for all the services rendered free to the children. Also, it does not include meals in hotels.

■ For further details, call 0891 244123.

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A cruise along the Nile on a deluxe vessel, not too large, and with like-minded travellers, has got to be one of the better ways of escaping the uncertain British weather. This cruising arrangement represents extraordinary value since the tariff includes all meals, transfers, guides and excursions. If you are looking for a true escape with that magical combination of culture and relaxation, then this is surely an opportunity that should not be missed.

ITINERARY IN BRIEF

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The modest charm of Georgian Yarm

Nothing prepares you for Yarm. Trapped as it is in a loop of the Tees, you cannot approach it from the west; to the south is undulating farmland which gives no hint that it holds anything out of the ordinary; just over the river are the modern and characterless villages of Egglecliffe and Eaglescliffe, and five miles away is the ugly sprawl of Teesside. But suddenly there is Yarm, Georgian and unpretentious, one of the most enchanting and perfectly preserved towns in England.

"If anything could destroy it," a friend said, "the traffic would." But it won't. A few years ago a bypass was constructed to rid the town of the 19,000 vehicles which poured down the High Street every day along the A19 from Stockton to York. It did nothing of the kind: it merely proved what the Government will not recognise — that the more roads you build, the more vehicles there will be to use them. Today there are just as many, and the wide, cobbled shoulders that line the carriage-way are packed just as tightly with parked cars.

And there, suddenly, is the splendid High Street, with the Town Hall which was built in 1710 in the Dutch style brought over by William III, stranded in a sea of traffic. The street is

Georgian — it was designated a conservation area in 1975 — but although there is a fine terrace of merchants' houses which would grace any town in England, together with a few other buildings of genuine distinction, you would hardly describe it as aristocratic. The greater part of it consists of unpretentious domestic buildings, mostly of three storeys, their paned roofs all at different levels.

When these houses were built, Yarm must have been a deep-drinking town, as well as an important coaching stop. There were then 16 inns and taverns in the High Street; eight of them are still there. One, the Ketton Ox, named after a shorthorn which was reared nearby and weighed 220 stone when it was slaughtered in 1801, is thought to be more than 400 years old, and was used for cock-fighting. A plaque on the wall of the George and Dragon Hotel stakes Yarm's claim to a place in history more firmly than anything else in the town. Here, it says, on February 12, 1820, was held the first meeting, under the chairmanship of Thomas Meynell, of a committee to establish the world's first railway. Only a year earlier the landed gentry, who were determined to protect their property, had blocked a Parliamentary Bill

to build the line: now revised proposals went through almost on the nod. A new committee met in Darlington and appointed an almost uneducated engine-wright, who lived in a cottage at Killingworth, as engineer. His name was George Stephenson. Four years later the Stockton to Darlington line was opened, along which Stephenson's Locomotion No 1 pulled the earliest passenger carriages. Between 1799 and 1851 a 43-arch viaduct was built across the Tees; mercifully only two of them can be glimpsed beyond the end of the High Street.

But Yarm's history goes back many centuries beyond the railway. Long before the Domesday Book there was a community here, and in the early Middle Ages, when it was the only port on the Tees it had a thriving export trade in wheat and wool. It became even more prosperous in 1400 when Bishop Walter Skirlaw built a bridge over the Tees which was nearer to the sea than any other. Part of it still exists. By Elizabeth I's time the town's corn market made it a trading centre for a wide area.

Yarm's great days lasted only until the beginning of the 18th century, when the development of Stockton, which was nearer the sea, forced it into slow decline. Then, with the 20th century, came the traffic which Yarm can neither resist nor contain.

Yet the town looks brighter and more confident than it did when I saw it 20 years ago. Buildings have been freshly painted, in a way that brings out the homogenous character of these unplanned houses and shops. And, traffic or no traffic, the old town is safe.

DEREK SEVERN

● Places to stay: Crathorne Hall Hotel, Crathorne, near Yarm, North Yorkshire (01642 700398) single room £104, double from £140. AA Hotel of the Year 1995. Tall Trees Hotel, Green Lane, Yarm, Cleveland (01642 781050), single £35, double £50. (VAT and full English breakfast inclusive) Leisure.



Yarm's Town Hall was built in 1710 in the Dutch style.



County Bridge at Barnard Castle was built in 1335. In the 17th century a tiny chapel on the bridge served as the setting for illegal marriages

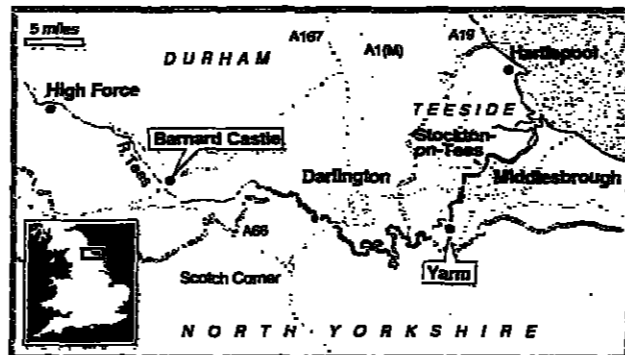
Up hill and down dale

The experience of Upper Teesdale's most awesome phenomenon left me completely exhausted. High Force is where the Tees swells to a raging inferno and plunges 70ft into a vast gorge over the tallest single-drop waterfall in England.

This is one of the loveliest of all Durham Dales, a polka-dot landscape, green valleys dotted with sheep, and a string of picturesque villages where cottages cluster around multiple village greens.

It was that difficult hour, too late for tea, too early for dinner. I had been on the road since dawn. I had tramped the North Pennine Moors, heard the cry of the curlew, wandered up hill and down dale, viewed High Force from below, and staggered my way up the sheer cliff for the view from the top — in other words, I had had quite enough nature.

Half an hour later I drove into Barnard Castle, everything you could wish for in a medieval market town. Old Barney, as it is affectionately known, grew around the Norman stronghold built by Bernard Balliol in 1125. Its history unfolds in a series of blue plaques all over town: The King's Head, in Horsemarket, was Dickens's base while he researched the evils of Victorian education. His 1837 trip to Teesdale inspired Nicholas Nickleby.



Mr Shaw's Academy at Bowes, providing a model for the infamous Dotheboys Hall, in Galgate two plaques commemorate Cyril Northcote Parkinson, discoverer of Parkinson's Law — "Work expands to fill the time available for its completion" — and Sir Roger Murchison, who had a town in New Zealand, falls on the Nile, a mountain range and a river in Australia, and a sound in Greenland named after him.

Along the Bank, the town's oldest street, weavers have been replaced by antique dealers, but two Tudor inns still dispense hospitality, the Old Well Inn, and Blagrove House, now a chic restaurant, where Cromwell was welcomed in 1648.

The octagonal Buttermarket is considered Northumbria's finest, but when built in 1742, in the normal reaction to "modern" architecture, it was

decried as a blot on the landscape. Upstairs served as the town hall, court room, prison and fire station. John Wesley lived to regret giving a sermon there — they turned the fire hoses on him.

But it is the castle itself that lifts the town into the realms of romance, even though all that remain are fragments of ruins and ghosts of its tumultuous past. It towers high on a cliff overlooking the Tees, northern boundary of the Yorvik Viking Kingdom, northeastern

boundary of the Domesday survey and until 1974 the boundary between Durham and Yorkshire.

The view down to the bridge might ring bells with Richard III who added the castle to his estates on his marriage to Lady Anne Neville.

County Bridge was built in 1335 to replace the Roman ford linking the forts at Bowes and Binchester. It enjoyed 15 minutes of fame in 1660 when Cuthbert Hilton, a clerk, thought up a way of performing illegal marriages.

In those days people thought twice before incurring the wrath of the Bishop of Durham or the Archbishop of York. A tiny chapel was built at the centre of the bridge and at the appropriate moment the happy couple were instructed to leap in the air, thereby rendering them in neither county at the moment of matrimony.

Next morning I set off along Newgate, past the alley where a carving over a lintel reads

Remember Man is Mortal, to Teesdale's most unexpected delight, a French Renaissance-style palace. The John and Josephine Bowes Museum. The Bowes were an unlikely pair, he a Teesdale businessman and MP, she a Parisienne actress and artist. Their plan was to build their treasure house for the public to enjoy in Calais but with French revolutionary fervour a little too hot for comfort, they chose Teesdale instead.

For 15 years they worked to fill their museum with the best art Europe could offer, paintings by El Greco, Goya, Canaletto, fine English and French furniture, porcelain, superb tapestries and oddities such as the silver swan automaton.

Sadly both Mr and Mrs Bowes died before the grand public opening. It remains their splendid memorial, and Teesdale's fine contribution. *Entente Cordiale.*

ROS DRINKWATER

DURHAM DALES FACT FILE

■ The Durham Dales, between the Yorkshire Dales and the Northumberland National Park, are easily reached via the A1 to Scotch Corner, then the A66 to Barnard Castle. Nearest rail connection is Darlington where hire cars are available. Prebooking essential.

■ Where to stay: Old Well Inn, 21 The Bank, Barnard Castle: traditional hospitality at this Tudor inn, sloping floors and fine food: doubles from £40 (01833 690130) Headlam Hall Hotel, Gainford: country house hotel in beautiful grounds: doubles from £70.00 (01325 730238). The Morritt Arms Hotel, Greta Bridge, Rokeby (A66). Close by Rokeby Park, Palladian mansion immortalised by Sir Walter Scott and with strong Dickensian connections: double B&B from £70.00 per night (01833 627232). ■ John & Josephine Bowes Museum, Newgate, Barnard Castle (01833 690606). Raby Castle, Staundrop, ancient seat of the "kingmaker" Nevills and one of England's most impressive medieval castles, magnificently furnished in baronial style.

■ Egglestone Abbey, just outside Barnard Castle, 12th-century ruined abbey built for the Premonstratensian Order, on a romantic site overlooking the Tees.

■ Tourist Information Centre, Barnard Castle 43, Galgate, Barnard Castle, County Durham (01833 690909).



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TRAVEL

JILL CRAWSHAW'S INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TIPS

Choice island

SPAIN in general, and Majorca in particular remain by far the No 1 choice for British holidaymakers booking through travel agents according to a survey by Lunn Poly, the Thomson-owned agency. During summer 1996, in all but one British mainland region, Majorca was the favourite, the exception being Greater London, where the island came equal second with Turkey (7 per cent), one per cent behind the whole of France.

This year, long haul holidays account for 13 per cent of the total (10 per cent last year), with Florida claiming 38 per cent, the Caribbean 20 per cent, the Dominican Republic 8 per cent, Jamaica and Barbados 3 per cent each and the Bahamas 1 per cent.

The survey showed that half a pint of beer costs 45p in Turkey and £1.93 in France; cup of coffee is 28p in Portugal, £2.14 in Hong Kong; a 10 minute taxi ride is £1.51 in Cyprus and £8 in Austria, a bottle of wine costs 91p in Spain and £5.52 in Australia, while a meal for two with wine costs £11.27 in Turkey, £31.13 in Austria and £52.91 in Australia.

Holidays for this winter are following the well-established pattern: Spain is up 1 per cent with 47 per cent, next comes the United States with 11 per cent (10 per cent last winter), the Caribbean 7 per cent (5 per cent) with Italy, Portugal, Cyprus, India and Malta all around the 3 per cent to 4 per cent mark.



Eurostar offers winter trips to the Alps for £144 return

Alps by rail

EVERY Saturday from 21 December until 15 March, French Railways (0181-880 8162) offer a winter service on Eurostar to Lille, then by TGV to Bourg St Maurice and most intermediate stations in the Alps. In addition, an overnight train from Lille will run every Friday to Bourg St Maurice, St Gervais and Briançon. Both services cost £144 return, with a couchette on the overnight train.

Sea culture

THE cultural cruise operator Swan Hellenic (0171-800 2200) offers a great variety of specialist cruises that feature historic destinations around the world with guest lectures from eminent journalists, his-

torians, archaeologists and biologists. The ship *Minerva* returns to the Red Sea in March 1997 for the Crucible of Civilisation cruise, which features Jordan and Egypt and offers an opportunity to scuba dive in the Red Sea. The cruise is accompanied by the marine biologist Dr David Irvine. Fares start from £1,630.

Cuba calls

CUBA, Alaska and the Yemén are the new additions to longhaul specialist Bales Tours' (01306 885 991) 42-country programme for 1997. Little visited by tourists, the university city of Santa Clara is included in their eight-day half-board Cuba tour (889). The city was the site of the last battle in the Cuban Revolution and the troop train captured by Che Guevara from Batista

is still there, as is a Che Guevara monument and museum. Havana, the old colonial world heritage site of Trinidad and a meal at yet another of Hemingway's favourite restaurants, the Floridita, are also on the itinerary. The 15-day Alaska and the Yukon Tour with visits to gold mining towns, national parks, a cruise to the Columbia glacier and a train journey on a Midnight Sun Express costs £3,365. Arabia Felix, the 12-day tour to the Yemén, costs £1,565.

Call home

THOMAS COOK has launched a rechargeable international phonecard, usable in 50 countries. The card, in £10 and £20 denominations, can be recharged over the telephone. Travellers are paying over the odds to phone home. One Madeira hotel charges a 77p per cent mark-up; the best deal was a 40 per cent mark up in Majorca. The new card is available from Cook's 550-plus UK shops and bureaux de change.

English only

DETERMINED English-only speakers can feel safe in Wolsey Lodge's (01449 741 297) privately-owned B&Bs in Spain, Italy and France, ranging from chateaux and manor houses to 200-year-old farms and 17th-century Tuscan villas — they all have English speaking British hosts.

A night's B&B in a Perigord mill house costs £30 each; or £30-35 in an Edwardian house on a cattle and cork estate overlooking the Bay of Gibraltar. Wolsey Lodge has 224 members in Britain, is a consortium of privately owned homes that welcome paying guests.

All downhill

WEDDINGS can be arranged in the romantic Mountain Chapel on Mont Mansfield in Stowe, Vermont, New England, as an optional extra on skiing holidays with Made to Measure Holidays (01243 533333). The price of £200 includes the marriage licence, use of the chapel and the services of a judge-minister "who usually expects a tip". Staying in the honeymoon suite at the family-run Timberholm Inn with log fires costs from £1,750 B&B per couple, including flights to Montreal, about 90 minutes' drive away, and car hire.

The company also offers ski holidays in Switzerland (seven days B&B from £467 including flights), Alpbach in Austria (seven nights from £569) France and Canada.



The statue of Christ overlooking Rio de Janeiro. Journey Latin America offers a seven-night break in Rio for £781

Rio bound

JOURNEY Latin America (0181-747 3108) offer seven-night city breaks to Rio de Janeiro for £781, Santiago de Chile from £740, and Buenos Aires from £836, before December 1. Prices include flights from Heathrow, five nights' accommodation in a superior tourist class hotel, and a half-day city tour. Passengers may extend their stay up to 90 days.

Food school

VISITORS to Paris can join the *Le Cordon Rouge* des Amateurs Gastronomes (00 33 1 45 01 71 71) in the Avenue Victor Hugo for a day course for Fr980 (£125) or half a day for Fr570 (£72); each session is dedicated to a single subject — pastries, sauces, or terrines — and is led by bilingual tutors. The school is open six days a week, and students may take the results of their labours away. Five half-day tickets cost Fr2,280 (£260).

Safe chalet

A FORMER Resistance safe house during the Second World War — a plaque commemorates four local members shot for their activities in the area — perched on the

slopes above Méribel, is one of the more unusual chalets on offer to skiers from the skiing specialists Meriski (01451 844 788).

The chalet was converted after the war into a small hotel patronised by the French glitterati, and also by Lord Hunt after his successful Everest expedition, and is now a comfortable base for eight people, situated by one of the 1992 Olympic pistes. It can only be reached on skis or on foot and an all-inclusive week costs from £529.



Ibiza has a new image

Chips are off

WITH IBIZA sloughing off its lager-and-chips reputation following a government-funded billion peseta clean-up, Magic of Spain (0181-745 4220) has introduced the island into its 1997 programme with houses, villas and small hotels in the countryside, above the genuinely unspoiled resort of Cale Vadella, and in the heart of D'Alt Vila, the picturesque old city of Ibiza Town.

The Hotel El Palacio is built into the original city walls and decorated in Hollywood style — the James Dean and Marilyn Monroe suites are adorned with their personal possessions. A week's B&B costs from £775.

Today's stars flock to Pikes, the exuberantly decorated 15th-century farmhouse, costing from £615-£879 B&B per week.

Fun boat

P&O (0171-800-2222) has introduced a Scrabble cruise, hosted by a former national Scrabble champion, and the Schweppes Sporting Challenge, which will feature a selection of sporting celebrities and include quizzes and games with ticket prizes for major sporting events. P&O is

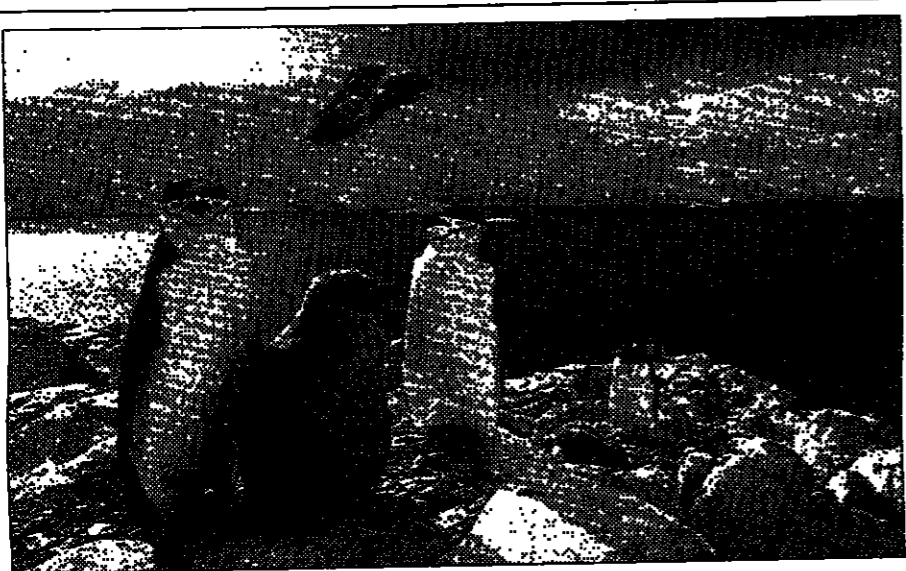
also featuring the popular Archers cruise again in its 1997 programme.

Marco Polo

ORIENT Lines is featuring a growing number of themed cruises on its ship, the *Marco Polo*. Topics include wildlife of the Indian Ocean with David Bellamy, the television naturalist, as guest lecturer, bowls with the former world champion David Bryant, astronomy and wines of the world. A 17-day gardening theme cruise in March 1996 visiting Australia and the Java Sea, features the writer and broadcaster Nigel Colburn. Prices start at £2,245.

Women only

HOLIDAYS for women only — single, separated, divorced or married but "without encumbrances" are offered in Ayia Napa, Cyprus, by Aphrodite Tours (0161-477 4521). Accommodation is in private rooms, the holidays are escorted by a woman guide, and the company promises "an opportunity to find romance or just have a good laugh". There are three departures in 1996 at prices from £345 for seven days and £430 for 14, including flights and B&B accommodation.



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Chocolate soldiers set for war

The opposing armies face one another across the Place de la Madeleine, waiting for the start of the battle.

In the right-hand corner, uniformed in brown, is Fauchon, and in the left, wearing red, Hédiard.

Paris's grandest food emporia — sworn enemies — watch each other's every move. Their weaponry is displayed in terrifying price tags and competing window displays, oozing with crystallised fruit, slabs of chocolate and autumn game birds. Fortunately for any serious foodie, or even foodie-voyeur, there are reasons to go to both shops for each has its strengths. Fauchon is the more exhaustive, with 20,000 prod-

ucts, enormous fresh food counters and a daily patisserie display to die for.

Hédiard has a smaller range of 6,000 products, but in some ways "plus snob", as the Parisians say, with its exquisite red and black packaging and pungent smell of coffee.

Auguste Fauchon's empire started as an exotic fruit stall on the Madeleine 110 years ago, and has expanded to cover half a block, including five restaurants. Ferdinand Hédiard had a head start, however, opening his first spices and fruit shop in Paris in 1850, and moving to the Madeleine in 1854.

M Fauchon claims to have brought the first avocados to

the city and was forced to give them away to doubting customers. However, M Hédiard was first with the pineapple, tested on his friends Eugene Delacroix and Alexandre Dumas.

Thus the noble lineage of neither shop is in doubt. Fauchon is rather old-fashioned, but behind every counter is an expert who will go into extreme detail if encouraged. A sommelier will take you on a tour of the stone wine cellar, stretching in a warren under the streets, pointing out Taittinger champagne in bottles designed by Roy Lichtenstein, and an affordable little Pouilly Fuisse at Fr44.

In the patisserie window at present there are slices a foot tall, topped by an enormous cherry, each slice being a cake in itself, concentered in chocolate. The tourists are forced to buy less fragile items so the English buy mustard and the Japanese buy tea, both easily obtained on native soil. Then there are FRIS jams, including rose petal and jasmine.

Hédiard also does extraordinary jams and jellies in small, home-made style batches, including a curious marmalade with entire slices of orange packing the jar. The coffee counter will grind beans and

brew a test cup of your chosen blend, and there are teas by the dozen, some set out for tasting beneath signs saying: "The 1996 first flush Darjeeling has arrived".

The shop has modernised, however, and there are four

hat saying "Groom Enrole". Both Fauchon and Hédiard have discovered a growing market in prepared dinners, duck or fish in complex sauces that allow the Parisian working woman to give a dinner party without entering the kitchen.

This is food that transcends mere cookery. On Hédiard's wall, a notice says: "Conviviality is the dish of the day, laughter is drunk like a good wine, ideas are good like good bread, exquisite flavours of sweet desserts make your company even more beautiful and good coffee gives wings."

KATE MUIR

● Fauchon, 36, Place de la Madeleine, 8th, (47 42 60 11).
● Hédiard, 21, Place de la Madeleine, 8th, (43 12 88 88).
● La Grande Epicerie, Bon Marché, (stocks Fauchon goods and other specialities) 35, Rue de Sévres, 7th, (44 39 81 00).

● Les Métiers d'Art de la Couture, exhibition of the crafts behind haute couture — the embroiderers, shoemakers, glove makers, jewellers — and the finished objects at Printemps department store, Boulevard Haussmann, 9th, from 7 to 26 October.



Hédiards in Paris and distributors throughout the world. Its first-floor restaurant was refurbished last year in cherrywood and colonial-style chairs covered in fake leopard and zebra skin, and is a chic, but not cheap, place for lunch. Hédiard's specialties, baskets of exotic fruits, chocolates and even mini-vegetables — artichokes like small roses with tiny carrots for foliage — can be home-delivered by a bellhop in uniform wearing a

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FLORA BRITANNICA PART TWO: PLANT MAGIC AND MEDICINE

HERBAL HISTORY

Folk lore and fiction

The use of wild plants in herbal and folk medicine is on the increase in Britain again, although it is a highly subjective business and rarely tested scientifically. Personal faith, idiosyncratic sensitivities and mode of use all influence the results.

But there have been some discernible traditions. Most remedies must have been discovered by trial and error. In more recent times, trial and error as a scientific discipline has brought plant-based drugs into mainstream medicine — for example, digoxin from foxgloves.

It is hard for us to imagine the awe with which plants were held in a pre-scientific age. Barely distinguishable species could feed you, poison you or drive you mad. It is no wonder that all manner of theories were developed to explain and predict their effects. The most popular system was sympathetic magic. This was based on a search for analogy, association and pattern within nature, and in the belief that like (or sometimes unlike) would cure like. Ivy berries would cure drunkenness, because ivy strangles vines. Some authors believed that windy food-plants such as lentils could protect (by repulsion) a garden from gale damage.

It is easy to mock these beliefs as primitive and superstitious, but they were based on observation and

an ecological outlook. Sadly, in the expansive, market-driven climate of the 17th and 18th centuries, they began to be vulgarised by commercial herbalists into the Doctrine of Signatures. This decreed that all plants had been "signed" by the Creator with some physical clue to their medicinal qualities. Yellow flowers were marked out for jaundice. The blotchy, oval leaves of lungworts were ordained for diseased lungs. But the doctrine was responsible for probably the bulk of the *materia medica* in the written herbal tradition.

Yet there is a third strand of indigenous plant medicine, often overlooked in the written herbal tradition, in which both the above strands were rooted. "Folk medicine" relies on native plants, but is essentially an oral tradition, derived from experience mixed with family and local customs and a dash of superstition. Although the medicinal history of many plants is included in *Flora Britannica*, the evidence of current use is chiefly confined to this last category. Given the local nature of the folk-medicine tradition, it is surprising how much agreement there is about effective plants. There were about six species that were recommended from personal experience, from all over Britain, and by mainstream practitioners, too.



Plants on holy ground were considered especially strong

Richard Mabey's *Flora Britannica* is the definitive new guide to Britain's wild beauty. In the second of our extracts he explores native remedies



Foxgloves, the "witches thimbles" of medieval herbalists, standing their ground in the landscape of a nuclear age. Plant-based drugs such as digoxin from foxgloves have now been brought into mainstream medicine through scientific trial and error

CURING PLANTS

The healing powers of 'knit-bone'



Comfrey is often found at the wayside

Among the nationwide contributors to *Flora Britannica*, these three plants were reported as being most helpful:

Comfrey, *Symphytum officinale*, the native Common comfrey, *S. x uplandicum*, Russian comfrey and *S. asperum*, Rough comfrey — the most common species — tend to be used interchangeably in herbal medicine.

As can be guessed from its surviving common names — knitbone, nip-bone, ass-ear — comfrey is still used as a healing poultice, for sprains, bruises and abrasions, and with more apparent success than almost any other herbal medicine. Comfrey (probably a corruption of the Latin *conferve*, a healing waterplant mentioned by Pliny, whose name is related to the verb *conferve*, to grow together) contains allantoin, which promotes healing in connective tissue. The medieval herbalists knew the plant as "bone-set", and the root was lifted in spring, grated and used much as plaster of Paris is today. The whole plant was regarded as a master-healer and was used for everything from drawing splinters to easing backache.

Today, the uses are just as various. A contributor wrote: "I work as a GP, and one of my patients had a coronary artery bypass recently. The lower end of the long leg wound failed to heal despite numerous standard dressings of different medical products. After an interval of a few days I visited the house to find a beaming patient. The leg wound was healed. He was delighted to tell me he had made an infusion of comfrey from his own plants and applied dressings soaked in the infusion."

Similar stories of use on ageing and arthritic joints come from many places, including an old people's home in Staffordshire. Its use even extends to household pets. Another contributor wrote: "I used it in a poultice for a dog after a road accident — his fur grew back, so I used it on a bald guinea pig, whose fur also grew back."

The old practice of taking regular comfrey infusions or concentrated tablets for gastric ulcers and colitis is now discouraged, as the plant contains alkaloids that can cause liver damage. But comfrey was eaten quite widely in the Second World War and the occasional young leaf eaten as a salad, or fried in butter is unlikely to cause any problems.

Feverfew, *Tanacetum parthenium*. As its name suggests, feverfew was a medicinal herb given for colds and fevers. In fact it was almost the classical and medieval world's aspirin, recommended for headaches, rheumatism, and general aches and pains. It reached Britain from the Balkans during the early Middle Ages. It has become one of the great success stories in herbal medicine and had its reputation vindicated by the City of London Migraine Clinic. In 1978, after a newspaper story about a woman who had rid herself of migraines by chewing feverfew leaves daily, Dr Stewart Johnson decided to undertake a long-term survey of 270 feverfew-takers (partly to ensure that they were not harming themselves). The results were remarkable. After a leaf a day for three months, 70 per cent reported a significant decrease in the frequency or severity of their attacks. A third appeared to have abolished their attacks altogether. These results were confirmed by a more rigorous trial (*BMJ*, August 31, 1985). The active chemicals have now been isolated and shown to work by stopping blood vessels in the brain going into spasm, believed to be the immediate "cause" of migraines. Many sufferers now make feverfew pills, sandwiches or nibble the leaves.

Greater celandine, *Chelidonium majus*. The mustard-yellow, buttercup-sized flowers of greater celandine would not immediately make you place it in the poppy family. But cut the stalk or leaves, and the latex characteristic of the family (orange in this species) oozes out. The latex has a successful role in herbal medicine as a wart-remover. This always may have been its role in folk medicine, and the reason it is so often found in rough ground close to buildings may be because it was once a common plant in cottage physic gardens.

Edited extracts from *Flora Britannica* to be published by Sinclair-Stevenson on Monday at £30. © 1996 Richard Mabey.

An aspirin by any other name

SCIENCE AND NATURE

Bog-myrtle

The aromatic resins have been used for scenting candles, and the whole plant is still used as an insect repellent. In 1995 a midge-repellent based on bog-myrtle, *Myrica*, appeared on the market. It was produced from wild myrtle gathered by crofters on the Isle of Skye. Eight volunteers each had one arm covered in a gel made from the essential oil and the other left untreated. Over ten minutes, the untreated arms recorded 155 bites while the treated arms received just 13.

Broad-leaved dock

Still universally used to rub on nettle stings, dock has also been used as a more serious salve by adults. One contributor wrote: "My grandmother's practice was to collect young dock leaves before breakfast. These were still wet with dew. They were thoroughly washed before being added to pure melted pigs' lard. The mixture was allowed to reduce on a low heat until the residue was a pale green colour, after which it was strained into clean jars and, when set, sealed. This ointment was used for the treatment of piles."

Common valerian

The clusters of pinkish-white flowers, out from late June to August, have a high vanilla-like perfume, which can become overpowering. The dried roots, by contrast, have a stale, rancid smell. (Valeric acid occurs both in the plant and in human perspiration.) Cats are fascinated by the smell and react in the same intoxicated way as they do to cat-mint. The roots have quite strong sedative properties, and an extract from them is found in many proprietary herbal tranquilisers. It is reputed to have been one of the drugs of which Hitler was fond.



Horse chestnut, left, is used in shampoos and gels, while rose-hip syrup is still made from farmed "wild" roses



Dandelion

Dandelion has long been used as a herbal diuretic and laxative. Its reputation has been confirmed scientifically. It contains high levels of potassium, an element that is removed from the body when urine production is stepped up.

Foxglove

The foxglove was once widely used in folk medicine, despite its high toxicity. Infusions of the leaves were given for sore throats and catarrh, and compresses for ulcers, swellings and bruises. But it was most frequently employed as a diuretic against dropsy. The 18th-century botanist and physician William Withering realised that the leaf's principal action was on the heart. He found that the leaf could be an invaluable help in the treatment of heart failure. His insistence on the use of small and accurately measured quantities of dried foxglove leaf ("digitalis") led to a new discipline in the prescription of powerful plant drugs and eventually to the

any joint that gives painful symptoms. The treatment is simple — sting the joint liberally with the plant, and if possible move the joint well immediately after application. Some relief is felt within 30 minutes, but the gently tingling warmth is felt for many hours.

Rose-hips

During the Second World War, rose-hips came into their own in the form of rose-hip syrup. Nutritional scientists had known since the 1930s that wild hips had a higher proportion of vitamin C than any other common fruit or vegetable. (A cup of rose-hip pulp provides more vitamin C than 40 fresh oranges.) The syrup is still made commercially today, though from farmed "wild" roses, and many country-dwellers still make syrup, often following instructions given by the Ministry of Food in their booklet *Hedgerow Harvest* (1943). The hips have to be collected in late summer when they have just turned red, to maximise the vitamin C content. The process involves mincing, stewing and then, crucially, straining through a jelly-bag to remove the prickly seeds, which can be a dangerous internal irritant. Boiled again with sugar and reduced, the hips make a syrup.

Willow family

Bitter infusions of willow bark were employed as a remedy for chills, rheumatism and "the ague". The remedy worked, and in the 19th century the active ingredient was isolated from willow bark and meadowsweet. This led in 1899 to the synthesis of what was to become the world's most widely used drug, which the pharmaceutical company Bayer called aspirin, after the botanical name for meadowsweet, *Spiraea ulmaria*.

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and how to use them

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